

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

FORESHADOWINGS OF EVIL.

THE stone walls of Greylands' Rest lay cold and still under the pale sunshine of the February day. The air was sharp and frosty ; the sun, though bright to the eye, had little warmth in it ; and the same cutting east wind that John Bent had complained of to the traveller, who had alighted at his house the previous afternoon, was prevailing still with an equal keenness.

Mr. Castlemaine felt it in his study, where he had been busy all the morning. He fancied he must have caught a chill, for a slight shiver suddenly stirred his tall, fine frame, and he turned to the fire and gave it a vigorous poke. The fuel was wood and coal mixed, and the blaze went roaring up the chimney. The room was not large. Standing with his back to the fire, the window was on his right hand ; the door on his left ; opposite to him, against the wall, stood a massive piece of mahogany furniture, called a bureau. It was a kind of closed-in desk, made somewhat in the fashion of the banker's desk at Stilborough, but larger ; the inside had pigeon-holes and deep drawers, and a slab for writing on. This inside was well filled with neatly arranged bundles of papers, with account-books belonging to the farm business and else, and with some few old letters : and the Master of Greylands was cautious to keep this desk closed and locked from the possibility of the view of those about him. The Castlemaines were proud, reticent, and careful men.

For a good part of the morning, Mr. Castlemaine had been seated at this desk. He had shut and locked it now, and was standing with his back to the fire, deep in thought. Two letters, of the large size in

vogue before envelopes were used, and sealed with the Castlemaine crest in red wax, lay on the side-table door, ready to be posted. His left hand was inside his waistcoat, resting on the broad pleated shirt-frill of fine cambric; his bright dark eyes had rather a troubled look in them as they sought that old building over the fields opposite, the Friar's Keep, and the sparkling sea beyond. In reality, Mr. Castlemaine was looking neither at the Friar's Keep nor the sea, for he was deep in thought, and saw nothing.

The Master of Greylonds was of a superstitious nature: it may as well be stated candidly: difficult though it was to believe such of so practical a man. Not to the extent of giving credit to stories of ghosts and apparitions; the probability is that in his heart he would have laughed at that; but he did believe in signs and warnings, in omens of ill-luck and good luck.

On this self-same morning he had awoke with an impression of discomfort, as if some impending evil were hanging over him; he could not account for it, for there was no conduced cause; and at the time he did not connect it with any superstitious feeling or fancy, but thought he must be either out of sorts, or had had something to annoy him that he did not at the moment recollect. Three or four little hindrances, or mishaps, occurred when he was dressing. First of all, he could not find his slippers: he hunted here; he looked there; and then remembered that he had left them the previous night in his study—a most unusual thing for him to do—and he had to go and fetch them, or else dress in his stockings. Next, in putting on a clean shirt, he tore the button-hole at the neck, and was obliged to change it for another one. And the last thing he did was to upset all his shaving-water, and had to wait while fresh was brought. "Nothing but hindrances: it seems as though I were not to get dressed to-day," muttered the Master of Greylonds. "Can the day have any ill-luck in store for me?"

The intelligent reader will doubtless be much surprised to hear him ask so ridiculous a question. Nevertheless, the same kind of thing had occurred twice before in Mr. Castlemaine's life, and each time a great evil had followed. Not of the present time was he thinking, now as he stood, but of one of those past days, and of what it had brought forth.

"Poor Maria!" he softly cried—alluding to his first wife, of whom he had been passionately fond. "Well, and merry, and loving in the morning; and at night stretched before me in death. It was an awful accident! and I—I have never cared quite so much for the world since. Maria was—what is it? Come in."

A knock at the door had disturbed the reflections. Mr. Castlemaine let fall his coat tails, which he had then caught up, and turned his head to it. A man-servant appeared.

"Commodore Teague wants to know, sir, whether he may move them two or three barrow-loads of wood to the Hutt to-day. He'd like to, he says, if it's convenient."

"Yes, he can take them. Is he here, Miles?"

"Yes, sir; he's waiting in the yard."

"I'll come and speak to him."

And the Master of Greylands, taking the two letters from the side-table, left the room to descend, shutting the door behind him.

We must turn for a few minutes to the Dolphin Inn, and to the previous evening. Nothing could well have exceeded John Bent's consternation when his guest, the unknown stranger, had revealed his name. Anthony Castlemaine! Not quite at first, but after a short interval, the landlord saw how it must be—that he was the son of the late Basil Castlemaine. And he was not at all best pleased to hear it in the moment's annoyance.

"You ought to have told me before, sir," he stammered in his confusion. "It was unkind to take me at a disadvantage. Here have I been using liberties with the family's name, supposing I was talking to an utter stranger!"

The frank expression of the young man's face, the pleasant look in his fine brown eyes, tended to reassure the landlord, even better than words.

"You have not said a syllable of my family that I could take exception to," he freely said. "You knew my father: will you shake hands with me, John Bent, as his son?"

"You are too good, sir; and I meant no harm by my gossip," said the landlord, meeting the offered hand. "You must be the son of Mr. Basil. It's a great many years since he went away, and I was but a lad, but I remember him. Your face is nearly the same as his was, sir. The likeness was puzzling me beyond everything. I hope Mr. Basil is well, sir."

"No," said the young man, "he is dead. And I have come over here as his son and heir, to claim Greylands' Rest."

It was even so. The facts were as young Anthony Castlemaine stated. And a short summary of past events must be given here.

When Basil Castlemaine went abroad so many years ago, in his hot-blooded youth, he spent some of the first years roaming about in what he called seeing the world. Later, circumstances brought him acquainted with a young English lady, whose friends lived in France in the province of Dauphiné: which, as the world knows, is close on the borders of Italy. They had settled near a place called Gap, and were in commerce there, owning some extensive silk-mills. Basil Castlemaine, tired, probably, of his wandering life and of being a beau garçon married this young lady, put all the money he had left (it was a very tolerably good sum) into the silk-mills, and became a partner.

There he had remained. He liked the climate ; he liked the French mode of life ; he liked the business he had engaged in. Not once had he revisited England. He was by nature a most obstinate man, retaining anger for ever, and he would not give token of remembrance to the father and brothers who, in his opinion, had been too glad to get rid of him. No doubt they had. But, though he did not allow them to hear of him, he heard occasionally of them. An old acquaintance of his, who was the son of one Squire Dobie, living some few miles on the other side Stilborough, wrote to him every two years, or so, and gave him news. But this correspondence (if letters written only on one side could be called such, for all George Dobie ever received back was a newspaper, sent in token that his letter had reached its destination) was carried on *en cachette* ; and George Dobie never disclosed it to living mortal, having undertaken not to do so. Some two years before the present period, George Dobie had died : his letters of course ceased, and it was by the merest accident that Basil Castlemaine heard of the death of his father. He was then himself too ill to return and put in his claim to Greylands' Rest ; in fact, he was near to death ; but he charged his son to go to England and claim the estate as soon as he should be no more ; nay, as he said, to enter into possession of it. But he made use of a peculiar warning in giving this charge to his son ; and these were the words :

“ Take you care what you are about, Anthony, and go to work cautiously. There may be treachery in store for you. The brothers —your uncles—who combined to drive me away from our homestead in days gone by, may combine again to keep you out of it. Take care of yourself, I say ; feel your way, as it were ; and beware of treachery.”

Whether, as is supposed sometimes to be the case, the dying man had some prevision of the future, and saw, as by instinct, what it would bring forth, certain it was, that he made use of this warning to young Anthony : and equally certain that the end bore out the necessity for the caution.

So here was Anthony Castlemaine. Arrived in the land of his family to put in his claim to what he deemed was his lawful inheritance, Greylands' Rest, the deep black band worn for his father yet fresh upon his hat.

Mrs. Castlemaine sat in the red parlour, reading a letter. Or, rather re-reading it, for it was one that had arrived earlier in the morning. A lady at Stilborough had applied for the vacant place of governess to Miss Flora Castlemaine, and had enclosed her testimonials.

“ Good music, singing, drawing ; no French,” read Mrs. Castlemaine aloud, partly for the benefit of Miss Flora, who stood by on a stool, not at all pleased that any such application should come ; for, as we have already seen, the young lady would prefer to bring herself

up without the aid of any governess. "Good-tempered, but an excellent disciplinarian, and very firm with her pupils——"

"I'm not going to have *her*, mamma," came the interruption. "Don't you think it!"

"I do not suppose you will have her, Flora. The want of French will be an insuperable objection. How tiresome it is! One seems unable to get everything. The last one who applied was not a sufficient musician for advanced pupils; and therefore could not have undertaken Ethel's music."

"As if Ethel needed to learn music still! Why, she plays as well—as well," concluded the girl, at a loss for any simile. "Catch me learning music when I'm as old as Ethel!"

"I consider it nonsense myself. But Ethel wishes it, and your papa so foolishly gives in to her whims in all things, that of course she has to be studied in the matter as much as you. It may be months and months before we get a lady who combines all that's wanted *here*."

Mrs. Castlemaine spoke resentfully. What with one thing and another, she generally was in a state of resentment against Ethel.

"I hope it may be years and years," cried Flora, leaning her arms on the table and kicking her legs about. "I hope we shall never get one at all."

"It would be easy enough to get one, but for this trouble about Ethel's music," grumbled Mrs. Castlemaine. "I have a great mind to send her to the Grey Nunnery for her lessons. Sister Charlotte, I know, is perfect on the piano; and she would be thankful for the employment."

"Papa would not let her go to the Nunnery," said the sharp girl. "He does not like the Grey Ladies."

"I suppose he'd not. I'm sure, what with this disqualification and that disqualification, a good governess is as difficult to fix upon as—Get off the table, my sweet child," hastily broke off Mrs. Castlemaine: "here's your papa."

The Master of Greylands entered the red parlour, after his short interview in the yard with Commodore Teague. Miss Flora slipped past him, and disappeared. He saw a good deal to find fault with in her rude, tomboy ways; and she avoided him when she could. Taking the poker, he stirred the fire into a blaze, just as he had, not many minutes before, stirred his own fire upstairs.

"It is a biting cold day," he observed. "I think I must have caught a little chill, for I seem to feel cold in an unusual degree. What's that?"

Mrs. Castlemaine held the letters still in her hand; and by the expression of her countenance, bent upon the contents, he could perceive there was some annoyance.

"*This* governess does not do: it is as bad as the last. She lacked music; this one lacks French. Is it not provoking, James?"

Mr. Castlemaine took up the letters, and read them. "I should say she is just the sort of person for Flora," he observed. "The testimonials are excellent."

"But her want of French! Did you not observe that?"

"I don't know that French is of so much consequence for Flora as the getting a suitable person to control her. One who will hold her under firm discipline. As it is, she is being ruined."

"French not of consequence for Flora!" repeated Mrs. Castlemaine. "What can you mean, James?"

"I said it was not of so much consequence, relatively speaking. Neither is it."

"And while Ethel's French is perfect!"

"What has that to do with it?"

"I will never submit to see Flora inferior in accomplishments to Ethel, James. French I hold especially by. Better, of the two, for her to fail in music than in speaking French. If it were not for Ethel's senseless whim of continuing to take music lessons, there would be no trouble."

"Who's this, I wonder?" cried Mr. Castlemaine. He alluded to a visitor's ring at the hall bell. Flora came dashing in.

"It's a gentleman in a fur coat," she said. "I saw him come up the walk."

"A gentleman in a fur coat!" repeated her mother. "Some one who has walked from Stilborough this cold day, I suppose."

Miles entered. On his small silver waiter lay a card. He presented it to his master, and spoke: "The gentleman says he wishes to see you, sir. I have shown him into the drawing-room."

The Master of Greylands was gazing at the card with knitted brow and haughty lips. He did not understand the name on it.

"What farce is this?" he exclaimed, tossing the card on the table in anger. And Mrs. Castlemaine bent to read it with aroused curiosity.

"Anthony Castlemaine."

"It must be an old card of your father's, James," she remarked. "Given, perhaps years ago, to some one to send in, should he ever require to present himself here—perhaps to crave a favour."

This view, just at the moment it was spoken, seemed feasible enough to Mr. Castlemaine, and his brow lost its fierceness. Another minute, and he saw how untenable it was.

"My father never had such a card as this, Sophia. Plain 'Anthony Castlemaine,' without hold or handle. His cards had 'Mr.' before the name. And look at the strokes and flourishes! What sort of a person is it, Miles?"

"A youngish sort of gentleman, sir. He has a lot of dark fur on his coat. He asked for Mr. James Castlemaine."

"Mr. *James* Castlemaine!" imperiously echoed the Master of Greylands, as he stalked from the room, card in hand.

The visitor was standing before a portrait in the drawing-room, contemplating it earnestly. It was that of old Anthony Castlemaine, taken when he was about fifty years of age. At the opening of the door he turned round and advanced, his hand extended and a pleasant smile on his face.

"I have the gratification, I fancy, of seeing my Uncle *James*!"

Mr. Castlemaine kept his hands to himself. He looked haughtily at the intruder; he spoke frigidly.

"I have not the honour of your acquaintance, sir."

"But my card tells you who I am," rejoined the young man. "I am indeed your nephew, uncle; the son of your elder brother. He was Basil, and you are *James*."

"Pardon me, sir, if I tell you what *I* think you are. An impostor."

"Ah no, do not be afraid, uncle. I am verily your nephew, Anthony Castlemaine. I have papers and legal documents with me to prove indisputably the fact; I bring you also a letter from my father, written on his death-bed. But I should have thought you might know me by my likeness to my father; and he—I could fancy that portrait had been taken for him"—pointing to the one he had been looking at. "He always said I greatly resembled my grandfather."

There could be no dispute as to the likeness. The young man's face was the Castlemaine face exactly: the well formed, handsome features, the clear and fresh complexion, the brilliant dark eyes. All the Castlemaines had been alike, and this one was like them all; even like James, who stood there.

Taking a letter from his pocket-book, he handed it to Mr. Castlemaine. The latter broke the seal—Basil's own seal; he saw that—and began to peruse it. While he did so, he reflected a little, and made up his mind.

To acknowledge his nephew. For he had the sense to see that no other resource would be left him. He did it with a tolerably good grace, but in a reserved, cold kind of manner. Folding up the letter, he asked a few questions; which young Anthony freely answered, and gave a brief account of the past.

"And Basil—your father—is dead, you say! Has been dead four weeks. This letter, I see, is dated Christmas Day."

"It was on Christmas Day he wrote it, uncle. Yes, nearly four weeks have elapsed since his death: it took place on the fourteenth of January; his wife, my dear mother, had died on the same day six years before. It was curious, was it not? I had meant to come over here immediately, as he charged me to do; but there were many matters of business to be settled, and I could not get away until now."

"Have you come over for any particular purpose?" coldly asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"I have come to stay, Uncle James. To take possession of my inheritance."

"Of your inheritance?"

"The estate of Greylands' Rest."

"Greylands' Rest is not yours," said Mr. Castlemaine.

"My father informed me that it was. He brought me up to no profession: he always said that Greylands' Rest would be mine at his own death; that he should come into it himself at the death of his father, and thence it would descend to me. And, as I have mentioned to you, we did not hear my grandfather was dead until close upon last Christmas. Had my father known it in the summer, he would have come over to put in his claim: he was in sufficiently good health then."

"It is a pity you should have come so far on a fruitless errand, young man. Listen. When your father, Basil, abandoned his home here in his youth, he forfeited all claim to the inheritance. He asked for his portion, and had it; he took it away with him and *stayed away*; stayed away for nigh upon forty years. What claim does he suppose that sort of conduct gave him on my father's affection, that he should leave to him Greylands' Rest."

"He always said his father would leave it to no one but him: that he knew it, and was sure of it."

"What my father might have done had Basil come back during his lifetime, I cannot pretend to say: neither is it of any consequence to conjecture now. Basil did not come back: and, therefore, you cannot be surprised that he missed Greylands' Rest; that the old father left it to his second son—myself—instead of to him."

"But did he leave it to you, uncle?"

"A superfluous question, young man. I succeeded to it, and am here in possession of it."

"I am told that there are doubts upon the point abroad," returned Anthony, speaking in the same pleasant tone, but with straightforward candour.

"Doubts upon what point?" haughtily demanded Mr. Castlemaine.

"What I hear is this, Uncle James. That it is not known abroad, and never has been known, how you came into Greylands' Rest. Whether the estate was left to you by will, or handed over to you by deed of gift, or given to you *in trust* to hold for my father. Nobody knows, I am told, anything about it, or even whether there was or was not a will. Perhaps you will give me these particulars, uncle?"

Mr. Castlemaine's face grew dark as night. "Do you presume to doubt my word, young man? I tell you that Greylands' Rest is mine. Let it content you."

"If you will show me that Greylands' Rest is yours, Uncle James,

I will never say another word upon the subject, or give you the smallest trouble. Prove this to me, and I will stay a few days in the neighbourhood, for the sake of cementing family ties—though I may never meet any of you again—and then go back to the place whence I came. But if you do not give me this proof, I must prosecute my claim, and maintain my rights."

"Rights!" sneered Mr. Castlemaine, beginning to lose his temper. "How dare you presume to talk to *me* in this way? A needy adventurer—for that is what I believe you are, left without means of your own—to come here, and—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the young man; "I am not needy. Though far from rich, I have a competency. Enough to keep me."

"It is all one to me," said Mr. Castlemaine. "You had better do as you say—go back to the place whence you came."

"If the estate be truly and lawfully yours, I should be the last to attempt to disturb you in it; I should not wish to do it. But if it be not yours, Uncle James, it must be mine; and until I can be assured one way or the other, I shall remain here, though it be for ever."

Mr. Castlemaine drew himself up to his full height. He was perfectly calm again; perhaps somewhat vexed that he had allowed himself to betray temper; and rejoined, coolly and prudently:

"I cannot pretend to control your movements; to say you shall go, or you shall come; but I tell you, frankly, that your staying will not serve you in the least. Were you to remain for ever—as you phrase it—not one tittle of proof would you get from me. Things have come to a pretty pass, if I am to be bearded in my own house, and have my word doubted."

"Well, Uncle James," said the young man, still speaking pleasantly, "then nothing remains for me but to try and find out the truth for myself. I wish you had been more explicit with me, for I am sure I do not know how to set about it," he added, candidly.

A faint, proud smile curled Mr. Castlemaine's decisive lips. It seemed to say, "Do what you please; it is beneath my notice." His nephew took up his hat to depart.

"May I offer to shake hands with you, Uncle James? I hope we need not be enemies?"

A moment's hesitation, and Mr. Castlemaine shook the offered hand. It was next to impossible to resist the frank geniality; just the same frank geniality that had characterised Basil; and Mr. Castlemaine thawed a little.

"It appears to be a very strange thing that Basil should have remained stationary all those years in France; never once to have come home!"

"I have heard him say many a time, Uncle James, that he should never return until he returned to take possession of Greylonds' Rest.

And during the time of the great war, travelling was dangerous and difficult."

"Neither could I have believed that he would have settled down so quietly. And to engage in commerce!"

"He grew to like the bustle of business. He had a vast capacity for business, Uncle James."

"No doubt ; being a Castlemaine," was the answer, delivered with conscious superiority. "The Castlemaines lack capacity for nothing they may choose to undertake. Good-morning ; and I wish you a better errand next time."

As Anthony Castlemaine, on departing, neared the gate leading to the avenue, he saw a young lady approaching it. A fisherman, to whom she was speaking, walked by her side. The latter's words, as he turned away, caught the ear of Anthony.

"You will tell the master then, please, Miss Castlemaine, and say a good word to him for me?"

"Yes, I will, Gleeson ; and I am very sorry for the misfortune," she answered. "Good-morning."

Anthony gazed with unfeigned pleasure on the beautiful face presented to him in—as he supposed—his cousin. It was Ethel Reene. The cheeks had acquired a soft rose-flush in the crisp air, the dark brown hair took a wonderfully bright tinge in the sunshine ; and in the deep grey eyes, glancing so straight and honestly through their long dark lashes into those of the stranger, there was a sweet candour that caused Anthony Castlemaine to think them the prettiest eyes he had ever seen. He advanced to her direct ; said a few words indicative of his delight at meeting her ; and, while Ethel was lost in astonishment, he suddenly bent his face forward, and kissed her on either cheek.

For a moment, Ethel Reene was speechless ; lost in indignation at the outrage ; and then she burst into a flood of tears. What she said, she hardly knew ; but all bespoke her sensitive sorrow of the insult. Anthony Castlemaine was overwhelmed. He had intended no insult, but only to give a cousinly greeting after the fashion of his adopted land ; and he hastened to express his contrition.

"I beg your pardon a million times. I am so grieved to have pained or offended you. I think you cannot have understood that I am your cousin ?"

"Cousin, sir !" she rejoined—and Mr. Castlemaine himself could not have spoken with more haughty contempt. "How dare you presume? I have not a cousin or a relative in the wide world."

The grey eyes were flashing, the delicate face was flushed to crimson. It occurred to Anthony Castlemaine that he must have made some unfortunate mistake. "Indeed," he reiterated, "I beg your pardon. I heard the man address you as Miss Castlemaine."

She was beginning to recover herself. She saw that he did not look at all like a young man who would gratuitously offer any lady an insult, but like a true gentleman. Moreover, there flashed upon her notice the strong likeness his face bore to the Castlemaines; and she thought that what he had done he had done in some error.

"I am not Miss Castlemaine," she condescended to explain, her tone losing part of its anger, but not its pride. "This is my home, and people often call me by the name. But—if I were Miss Castlemaine—who are you, sir, that you should claim to be my cousin? The Castlemaines have no strange cousins."

"I am Anthony Castlemaine, young lady; son of the late Basil Castlemaine, the heir of Greylands. I come from an interview with my Uncle James; and I—I beg your pardon most heartily once more."

"Anthony Castlemaine, the son of Basil Castlemaine!" she exclaimed, nearly every emotion forgotten in astonishment; but a conviction, nevertheless, seizing upon her that it was true. "The son of the lost Basil!"

"I am, indeed, his son," replied Anthony. "He is dead, and I have come over to claim, and, I hope, enter into, my patrimony, Greylands' Rest."

CHAPTER V.

THE BALL.

LIGHTS gleamed from the windows of the banker's house at Stilborough; a flood of light blazed from the hall, and was reflected on the pavement outside, and on the colours of the flowering plants just within the entrance. Mr. Peter Castlemaine and Miss Castlemaine gave a dance that night; and it was the custom to open the door early, and keep it open, for the arrival of the expected guests.

The reception-rooms were in readiness, and gay with their wax lights and flowers. They opened mostly into one another. The largest of them was appropriated to dancing; all its furniture and its carpet had been removed; benches occupied the walls, under the innumerable sconces bearing lights; and the floor was chalked artistically, in a handsome pattern of flowers, after the fashion of the day.

In the small apartment that was her own sitting-room, stood Mary Ursula. In her rich robes of white silk and lace, and in the jewels which had been her mother's, and which it was her father's wish she should wear on grand occasions; with her stately form and her most lovely face, she looked of almost regal beauty. Excitement had flushed her cheeks; on her delicate and most perfect features sat an animation not often seen there. Whatever evil might be overhanging the house, at least no prevision of it rested on Miss Castlemaine; and perhaps few young ladies in all the kingdom could be

found who were possessed of the requisites for happiness in a degree that could vie with the banker's daughter, or who had so entire a sense of it. Beautiful, amiable, clever, rich ; the darling of her father ; sheltered from every care in her sumptuous home ; loving and beloved by a young man worthy of her, and to whom she was soon to be united ! In the days to come, Mary Ursula would look back on this time, and tell herself that the very intensity of its happiness might have warned her that it was too bright to last.

He, her lover, was by her side now. He had come early, on purpose to be a few minutes alone with her, before the arrival of the other guests ; and they stood together on the hearth-rug. A quiet-looking young man of middle height, with dark hair, just the shade of hers, and rather a pensive and mild cast of face. Such was Mr. Blake-Gordon.

They were conversing of the future—that to both of them looked so bright ; of the home that ere long was to be theirs in common. Mr. Blake-Gordon had been for some little time searching for a house, and had not met with a suitable one. But he thought he had found it now.

"It seems to me to be just the thing, Mary," he was saying—for he never called her by her double-name, but "Mary" simply. "Only four miles from Stilborough on the Loughton road ; which will be within an easy distance of your father's home and of Sir Richard's. It was by the merest chance I heard this morning that the Wests were going ; and we can secure it at once, if we will, before it goes into the market."

Miss Castlemaine knew the house by sight ; she had passed it many a time in her drives and seen it nestling away amid the trees. It was called by rather a fanciful name—Raven's Priory.

"It is not to be let, you say, William ; only bought."

"Only bought. There will be, I presume, no difficulty made to that with the authorities."

He spoke with a smile. She smiled too. Difficulty !—with the loads of wealth that would be theirs sometime ? They might well laugh at the idea.

"Only that—that it is uncertain how long we may require to live in it," she said, with a slight hesitation. "I suppose that—some time—"

"We shall have to leave it for my father's home. True. But that, I trust, may be a long while off. And then we could re-sell Raven's Priory."

"Yes, of course. Is it a nice place, William ?"

"Charming," he replied with enthusiasm. For of course all things, the proposed residence included, wore to him the hue of *couleur de rose*.

"I have never been inside it."

"No. The Wests are churlish people, keeping no company. Report says that Mrs. West is a hypochondriac. They let me go in this morning, and I went over all the house. It is the nicest place, love—and not too large or too small for us; and the Wests have kept it in good condition. You will be charmed with the drawing-rooms, Mary; and the conservatory is one of the best I ever saw. They want us to take to the plants."

"Are they nice?"

"Beautiful. The Wests are moving to London, to be near good advice for her, and they do not expect to get anything of a conservatory there, worth the name. I wonder what your papa will think about this house, Mary? We might tell him of it now. Where is he?"

"He is out," she answered. "Just as he was going up to dress, Thomas Hill sent for him downstairs, and they went out somewhere together. Papa ran up to tell me he would be back as soon as he could, but that I must for once receive the people alone."

"I wish I might stand by your side to help!" he said, impulsively. "Would any of them faint at it?—do you think Mrs. Webb would, if she were here? Ah well—a short while, my darling, and I shall have the right to stand by you."

He stole his arm round her waist, and whispered to her a repetition of those love-vows that had so often before charmed her ear and thrilled her heart. Her hair touched his shoulder; the faint perfume of her costly fan, that she swayed unconsciously as it hung from her wrist, was to him like an odour from Paradise: he recounted to her all the features he remembered of the house that neither of them doubted would be their future home; and the minutes passed in, to both, bliss unutterable.

The crashing up of a carriage—of two carriages it seemed—warned them that this sweet pastime was at an end. Sounds of bustle in the hall succeeded to it: the servants were receiving the first guests.

"Oh William—I forgot—I meant to tell you," she hurriedly whispered. "I had the most ugly dream last night. And you know I very rarely do dream. I have not been able to get it out of my mind all day."

"What was it, Mary?"

"I thought we were separated, you and I; separated for ever. We had quarrelled, I think; that point was not clear; but you went off one way; and I another. It was in the gallery of this house, William. You went out at the other end by the door of the dining-room, and I at this end; and we turned at the last to look at one another. Oh, the look was dreadful! I shall never forget it: so full of pain and sadness: and we knew, both of us knew, that it was the last farewell look: that we should never again meet in this world."

"Oh, my love, my love!" he murmured, bending his face on hers. "And you could let it trouble you!—knowing it was but a dream! Nothing but the decree of God—death—shall ever separate us, Mary. For weal or for woe, we will go through the life here together."

He kissed away the tears that had gathered in her eyes at the remembrance; and Miss Castlemaine turned hastily into one of the larger rooms, and took up her standing there in expectation. For the feet of the gay world were already traversing the gallery.

She welcomed her guests, soon coming in thick and threefold, with the most gracious manner, and the calm repose of bearing that always characterised her, apologising to all for the absence of her father; telling them that he had been called out unexpectedly on some matter of business, but would be in soon. Amid others, came the party from Greylands' Rest, arriving rather late. Mrs. Castlemaine in black velvet, leaning on the arm of her step-son; Ethel Reene walking modestly behind, in a simple dress of white net, adorned with white ribbons. There was many a fine young man present; but never a finer or more attractive one than Harry Castlemaine; with the handsome Castlemaine features, the easy, independent bearing, and the ready tongue.

"Is it of any use to ask whether you are at liberty to honour me with your hand for the first dance, Mary Ursula?" he inquired, after leaving Mrs. Castlemaine on a sofa.

"Not the least, Harry," answered Miss Castlemaine, smiling. "I am engaged for that, and for the second as well."

"Of course. Well, it is all as it should be, I suppose. Given the presence of Mr. Blake Gordon, and no one else has so good a right as he to open the ball with you."

"You will find a substitute for me by the asking, Harry. See all those young ladies around; not one but is glancing towards you with the hope that you may seek her."

He laughed rather consciously. He was perfectly well aware of the universal favour accorded by the ladies, young and old, to Harry Castlemaine. But this time, at any rate, he intended to disappoint them all. He turned to Miss Reene.

"Will you take compassion upon a rejected man, Ethel? Mary Ursula won't have me for the first two dances, you hear; so I appeal to you in all humility to heal the smart. Don't reject me."

"Nonsense, Harry!" was the young lady's answer. "You must not ask *me* for the first dance; it would be like brother and sister dancing together; all the room would resent it in you, and call it bad manners. Choose elsewhere. There's Miss Mountsorrel; she will not say you nay."

"For the dances, no; but she'll not condescend to speak three words to me while they are in process," returned Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

"If you do not dance them with me, Ethel, I shall sit down until the two first dances are over."

He spoke still in the same laughing, half joking manner ; but, nevertheless, there was a ring of decision in the tone of the last words ; and Ethel knew he meant what he said. The Castlemaines rarely broke through any decision they might announce, however lightly it was spoken ; and Harry possessed somewhat of the same persistent will.

"If you make so great a point of it, I will dance with you," observed Ethel. "But I must again say that you ought to take anyone, rather than me."

"I have not seen my uncle yet," remarked Miss Castlemaine to Ethel, as Harry strolled away to pay his devoirs to the room generally. "Where can he be lingering ?"

"Papa is not here, Mary Ursula."

"Not here ! how is that ?"

"Really I don't know," replied Ethel. "When Harry came running out to get into the carriage to-night—we had been sitting in it quite five minutes waiting for him ; but he had been away all day, and was late in dressing—Miles shut the door. 'Don't do that,' said Harry to him, 'the master's not here.' Upon that, Mrs. Castlemaine spoke, and said papa was not coming with us."

"I suppose he will be coming in later," said Mary Ursula, as she moved away to meet fresh guests.

The dancing began with a country dance ; or, as would have been said then, the ball opened with one. Miss Castlemaine and her lover, Mr. Blake Gordon, took their places at its head ; Harry Castlemaine and Miss Reene were next to them. For in those days, people stood much upon etiquette, even in the matter of taking places in a country dance ; precedence being accorded where it was due.

The dance chosen was one called the Triumph. Harry Castlemaine led Mary Ursula down between the line of admiring spectators. William Blake Gordon followed, and they brought the young lady back in triumph. Such was the opening figure. It was a sight to be remembered in after years ; the singular good looks of at least two of the three, the faces of all sparkling with animation and happiness, Harry, the sole male heir of the Castlemaines, with the tall fine form and the handsome face ; and Mary Ursula, so stately and beautiful. Ethel Reene was standing alone, in her quiet loveliness, looking like a snowdrop, and waiting until her turn should come to be in like manner taken down. The faces of all sparkled with animation and happiness, the gala robes of the two young ladies added to the charm of the scene. Many recalled it later ; recalled it with a pang ; for, of those four, ere a year had gone by, one was not, and another's life had been blighted. No prevision, however, rested on any of them this night of what the dark future held in store ; and they revelled in the moment's enjoyment,

gay at heart. Heaven is too merciful to let Fate cast its ominous shade down before the time.

The banker came in ere the first dance was over. Moving about from room to room among his guests, glancing with approving smile at the young dancers, seeing that the card-tables were filled, he at length reached the sofa of Mrs. Castlemaine. She happened to be alone on it just then, and he sat down beside her.

"I don't see James anywhere," he remarked. "Where's he hiding himself?"

"He has not come," replied Mrs. Castlemaine.

"No! How's that? James enjoys a ball."

"Yes, I think he does still, nearly as much as his son Harry."

"Then, what has kept him away?"

"I really do not know. I had thought, nearly to the last, that he meant to come. When I was all but ready myself, finding James had not begun to dress, I sent Harriet to remind him of the lateness of the hour, and she brought word back that her master was not going."

"Did he say why?" asked Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"No. I went to his study afterwards, and found him seated at his bureau. He seemed busy. All he said to me was, that he should remain at home; neither more nor less. You know, Peter, James rarely troubles himself to give a reason for what he does."

"Well, I am sorry. Sorry that he should miss a pleasant evening, and also because I wanted to speak to him. We may not have many more of these social meetings."

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Castlemaine, assuming that her brother-in-law alluded in an indirect way to his daughter's approaching marriage. "When once you have lost Mary Ursula, there will be nobody to hold festivities for."

"No," said the banker, absently.

"I suppose it will be very soon now."

"What will be soon?"

"The wedding. James thinks it will be after Easter."

"Oh—ay—the wedding," spoke Mr. Peter Castlemaine, with the air of a man who has just caught up some recollection that had slipped from him. "I don't know yet: we shall see: no time has been decided on."

"Close as his brother," thought Mrs. Castlemaine. "No danger that he will disclose anything unless he chooses."

"Will James be coming in to Stilborough to-morrow?" asked the banker.

"I'm sure I cannot tell. He goes out and comes in, you know, without any reference to me. I should fancy he would *not* be coming in, unless he has anything to call him. He has not seemed well to-day; thinks he has caught a cold."

"Ah then, I daresay that's the secret of his staying at home to-night," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"Yes, it may be. I did not think of that. And he has also been very much annoyed to-day: and, you know, Peter, if once James is thoroughly put out of temper, it takes some little time to put him in it again."

The banker nodded assent. "What has annoyed him?"

"A very curious thing," replied Mrs. Castlemaine: "you will hardly believe it when I tell you. Some young man——"

Breaking off suddenly, she glanced around to make sure that no one was within hearing. Then drawing nearer to the banker, went on in a lowered voice.

"Some young man presented himself this morning at Greylands' Rest, pretending to want to put in a claim to the estate."

Abstracted though the banker had been throughout the brief interview, these words aroused him to the quick. In one moment, he was the calm, shrewd, attentive business man, Peter Castlemaine, his head erect, his keen eyes observant.

"I do not understand you, Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Neither do I understand," she rejoined. "James said just a word or two to me, and I gathered the rest."

"Who was the young man?"

"Flora described him as wearing a coat trimmed with fur; and Miles thought he spoke with somewhat of a foreign accent," replied Mrs. Castlemaine, deviating unconsciously from the question, as ladies sometimes do deviate.

"But don't you know who he was? Did he give no account of himself?"

"He calls himself Anthony Castlemaine."

As the name left her lips, a curious kind of change, as though he were startled, passed momentarily over the banker's countenance. But he neither stirred nor spoke.

"When the card was brought in with that name upon it—James happened to be in the red parlour, talking with me about a new governess—I said it must be an old card of your father's that somebody had got hold of. But it turned out not to be that. What he wants to make out is, that he is a son of Basil Castlemaine."

"Did James see him?"

"Oh dear yes. Their interview lasted more than an hour."

"And he told James he was Basil's son?—this young man?"

"I think so. At any rate, the young man told Ethel he was. She happened to meet him as he was leaving the house, and he introduced himself to her as Anthony Castlemaine, Basil's son, and said he had come over to claim his inheritance—Greylands' Rest."

"And where's Basil?" asked the banker, after a pause.

"Dead."

"Dead?"

"So the young man wishes to make appear. My opinion is, he must be some impostor."

"An impostor, no doubt," assented the banker, slowly. "I only wonder that we have not—under the circumstances—had people here before, claiming to be connected with us."

"And I am sure the matter has annoyed James very much," pursued Mrs. Castlemaine. "He betrayed it in his manner; he was not at all like himself all the afternoon. I should make short work of it if the man came again, were I James, and threaten him with the law."

Mr. Peter Castlemaine said no more, and presently rose to join other of his guests. But as he talked to one, laughed with another, listened to a third; his head bent in attention, his eyes looking straight into their eyes; none had an idea that these signs of interest were evinced mechanically, and that his mind was far away.

He had enough complexity and trouble of his own just then, as Heaven knew; very much indeed on this particular evening; but this other complexity that appeared to be arising for his brother James added to it. To Mrs. Castlemaine's scornfully expressed opinion that the man was an impostor, he had assented just in the same way that he was now talking with his guests—mechanically. For, some instinct, or prevision, call it what you will, lay on the banker's heart that the man would turn out to be no impostor, but the veritable son of the exile, Basil.

Peter Castlemaine was much attached to his brother James, and for James's own sake he would have regretted that any annoyance or trouble should arise for him; but he had also a selfish motive for regretting it. In his dire strait as to money—for to that it had now come—he had been rapidly making up his mind that evening to appeal to James to let him have some. The appeal might not be successful under the most favourable auspices: he knew that: but, with this trouble looming for the Master of Greylands, he foresaw it must and would fail.

Supper over—the elaborate, heavy, sit-down supper of those days, and the two dances following upon it—most of the guests departed. Mr. Blake Gordon, seeking about for the banker to wish him good-night, at length found him standing over the fire in the deserted card-room. Absorbed though he was in his own happiness, the young man could but notice the flood-tide of care on the banker's brow. It cleared off, as though by magic, when the banker looked up and saw him.

"Is it you, William? I thought you had left."

"I should hardly go, sir, without wishing you good-night. What a delightful evening it has been!"

"Ay, I think you have all enjoyed yourselves."

"Oh very, very much."

"Well, youth is the time for enjoyment," observed the banker. "We can never again find the zest in it, once youth is past."

"You look tired, sir; otherwise I—I might have ventured to trespass on you for five minutes' conversation, late though it be," pursued Mr. Blake Gordon, with some hesitation.

"Tired!—not at all. You may take five minutes; and five to that, William."

"It is about our future residence, sir. Raven's Priory is in the market: and I think—and Mary thinks—it will just suit us."

"Ay; I heard more than a week ago that the Wests were leaving."

The words took William Blake Gordon by surprise. He looked at the banker.

"Did you, sir!—more than a week ago! And, did it not strike you that it would be a very suitable place for us?"

"I cannot say that I thought much about it," was the banker's answer; and he was twirling an ornament on the mantel-piece about with his hand as he spoke: a small, costly vase of old china from Dresden.

"But *don't* you think it would be, sir?"

"I daresay it might be. The gardens and conservatories have been well kept-up; and you and Mary Ursula have both a weakness for rare flowers."

That was perfectly true. And the "weakness" showed itself then, for the young man went off into a rapturous description of the wealth of Raven's Priory in that respect. The ten minutes slipped away to twenty; and in his own enthusiasm Mr. Blake Gordon did not notice the absence of it in his hearer.

"But I must not keep you longer, sir," he suddenly said, as his eyes caught the hands of the clock. "Perhaps you will let me see you about it to-morrow. Or allow my father to see you—that will be better."

"Not to-morrow," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "I shall be particularly engaged all day. Some other time."

"Whenever you please, sir. Only—we must take care that we are not forestalled in the purchase. Much delay might—"

"We can obtain a promise of the first refusal," interrupted the banker in a somewhat impatient tone. "That will not be difficult."

"True. Good-night, sir. And, thank you for giving us this most charming evening."

"Good-night, William."

But Mr. Blake Gordon had not yet said his last farewell to his betrothed wife; and lovers never think *that* can be spoken often enough. He found her in the music-room, seated before the organ. She was waiting for her father.

"We shall have Raven's Priory, Mary," he whispered, speaking in his great hopefulness ; and his voice was joyous, and his pale face had a glow on it not often seen there. "Your papa, himself, says how beautiful the gardens and conservatories are."

"Yes," she softly answered. "We shall be sure to have it."

"I may not stay, Mary : I only came back to tell you this. And to wish you good night once again."

Her hand was within his arm, and they walked together to the end of the music-room. All the lights had been put out, save two. Just within the door, he halted and took his farewell. His arm was around her, his lips were upon hers.

"May all good angels guard you this happy night,--my love!—my promised wife!"

He went down the corridor swiftly ; she stole her blushing face to the opening of the door, to take a last look at him. At that moment a crash, as of some frail thing broken, was heard in the card-room. Mr. Blake Gordon turned into it ; Mary followed him.

The beautiful Dresden vase lay on the stone flags of the hearth, shivered into many atoms. It was one that Mary set great store by for it had been a purchase of her mother's.

"Oh papa ! How did it happen ?"

"My dear, I swept it off unwittingly with my elbow : I am very sorry for it," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTHONY CASTLEMAINE ON HIS SEARCH.

THE hour of dinner with all business men in Stilborough was half-past one o'clock in the day. Perhaps Mr. Peter Castlemaine was the only man who did not really dine then ; but he took his luncheon ; which came to the same thing. It was the recognised daily interregnum in the public doings of the town—this half-hour between half-past one and two : consequently shops, banks, offices, all were virtually though not actually closed. The bank of Mr. Peter Castlemaine made no exception. Except on Thursday, market day, the bank was left to the care of one clerk during this half-hour.

It was the day after the ball. The bank had been busy all the morning, and Mr. Peter Castlemaine had been away the best part of it. He came back at half-past one, just as the clerks were filing out.

"Do you want me, sir ?" asked Thomas Hill, standing back with his hat in his hand ; and it was the dreadfully worn, perplexed look on his master's face that induced him to ask the question.

"Just for a few minutes," was the reply. "Come into my room."

Once there, the door closed upon them, they sat in dire tribulation

There was no dinner for poor Thomas Hill that day; there was no lunch for his master: the hour's perplexities were all in all.

On the previous evening, some stranger had arrived at Stilborough, had put up at the chief inn there, the Turk's Head; and then, after inquiring the private address of Mr. Peter Castlemaine's head clerk had betaken himself thither. Thomas Hill was seated at his tea when the gentleman was shown in. It proved to be a Mr. Fosbrook from London: and the moment the clerk heard the name, Fosbrook, and realised the fact that the owner of it was in actual person before him, he turned as cold as a stone, for his presence bespoke danger to Mr. Peter Castlemaine. That he had come down to seek explanations which might no longer be put off, the clerk felt sure of: and the fact of his seeking out *him* instead of his master, proved that he suspected something was more than wrong. The clerk had known Mr. Fosbrook in the years gone by.

Thomas Hill dared not afford explanation himself, for he knew not what it would be safe to say, what not. He induced Mr. Fosbrook to return to his inn, undertaking to bring his master to wait on him there. To the banker's house he would not take the stranger; for the gaiety, of which it was that night the scene, was not altogether a pleasant thing to show to a creditor. Leaving Mr. Fosbrook at the Turk's Head he came on.

Mr. Peter Castlemaine went at once to the inn. He did not dare do otherwise. The interview was not a long one; for the banker, pleading the fact of having friends at home, postponed it until the morning.

It was with this gentleman that his morning had been spent; that he had now, half-after one o'clock, just come home from. With the weary look in his face, and the more than weary pain at his heart.

"And what is the result, sir?" asked Thomas Hill as they sat together.

"The result is, that he will wait a few days, Hill; three or four, he says. Perhaps that may be made five or six: I don't know. After that—if he is not satisfied by tangible proofs that things are right and not wrong, so far as he is concerned—there will be no further waiting."

"And the storm must burst?"

"The storm must burst," echoed Peter Castlemaine.

"Oh but, sir, my dear master, what can be done in those few poor days?" cried Thomas Hill in agitation. "Nothing. You must have more time allowed you."

"I had much ado to get that, Hill. I had to LIE for it," he added in a lower tone.

"Do you see a chance yourself, sir?"

"Only one. There is a chance; but it is a very remote one. That last venture of mine has turned up trumps: I had the news by the mail this morning: and if I can realise the funds in time, the present danger may be averted."

"And the future trouble also," spoke Thomas Hill, catching at the straw of hope. "Why, sir, that will bring in a mine of wealth."

"Yes. The only real want now is time. Time ! time ! I have said it before perhaps too sanguinely ; I can say it in all truth now."

"And, sir—did you not show this to be the case to Mr. Fosbrook ?"

"I did. But alas, I had to deny to him my other pressing liabilities—and he questioned sharply. Nevertheless, I shall tide it over, all of it, if I can only secure the time. That account of Merrit's—we may as well go over it together now, Thomas. It will not take long."

They sat down to the table together. A thought was running through Thomas Hill's mind, and he spoke it as he opened the ledgers.

"With this good news in store, sir, making repayment certain—for if time be given you, you will now have plenty—don't you think Mr. Castlemaine would advance you funds ?"

"I don't know," said the banker. "James seems to be growing cautious. And this trouble that may be looming upon him, will make him more so."

"What trouble ?" asked Thomas Hill.

"Some man, I hear, has made his appearance at Greylands, calling himself Anthony Castlemaine, and saying that he is a son of my brother Basil," replied the banker confidentially.

"Never !" cried the old man. "But, sir, if he be, how should that bring trouble on Mr. Castlemaine ?"

"Because the stranger says he wants to claim Greylands' Rest."

"He must be out of his mind," said Thomas Hill. "Greylands' Rest is Mr. Castlemaine's ; safe enough too, I presume."

"But a man such as this may give trouble, don't you see."

"No, sir, I don't see it—with all deference to your opinion. Mr. Castlemaine has only to show him it is his—"

A knock at the room door interrupted the sentence. The clerk rose to open it, and received a card and a message. His master looked rather startled as he read the name on it : Anthony Castlemaine.

Somewhere about an hour before, young Anthony Castlemaine, after a late breakfast *à la fourchette*, had turned out of the Dolphin Inn-Halting for a few seconds to gaze across beyond the beach, for he thought the sea the most beautiful object in nature, and believed he should never tire of looking at it, he went on up the hill, past the church, and was fairly on his road to Stilborough. It was a lonely road enough ; never a dwelling to be seen all the way, save a farm homestead or two, lying away amid their buildings ; but Anthony Castlemaine walked slowly, taking in all the points and features of his native land, that were so strange to him. He stood to read the milestones ; he leaned on the fences ; he admired the tall fine trees, leafless though they were ; he critically surveyed the two or three carts and waggons that passed. The sky was blue, the sun bright, he enjoyed the walk and did not

hurry himself: but nevertheless he at length reached Stilborough, and found out the house of the banker. He rang at the private door.

The servant who opened it saw a young man dressed in a rather uncommon kind of over-coat. The face was that of a stranger; but Stephen fancied it was a face he had seen before.

“Is my Uncle Peter at home?”

“Sir!” returned the servant, staring at him. For the only nephew the banker possessed, so far as Stephen knew, was the son of the Master of Greylands. “What name did you please to ask for, sir?”

“Mr. Peter Castlemaine. This is his residence, I am told.”

“Yes, sir, it is.”

“Can I see him? Is he at home?”

“He is at home, in his private room, sir; I fancy he is busy. I'll ask if you can see him. What name shall I say, sir?”

“You can take my card in. And please say to your master that if he is busy, I can wait.”

The man glanced at the card as he knocked at the door of the private room, and read the name: “Anthony Castlemaine.” “It must be a nephew from over the sea,” he thought: “he looks foreign. Perhaps a son of that lost Basil.”

Thomas Hill took in the card and the message. He came back, saying the gentleman was to wait: Mr. Peter Castlemaine would see him in a quarter of an hour. So the servant, beguiled by the family name, thought he should do right to conduct the stranger upstairs to the presence of Miss Castlemaine, and said so, while helping him to take off his over-coat.

“Shall I say any name, sir?” asked the man, as he laid his hand on the door handle.

“Mr. Anthony Castlemaine.”

Mary Ursula was alone. She sat near the fire doing nothing, and very happy in her idleness, for her thoughts were buried in the pleasures of the past gay night, and a smile was on her face. When the announcement was made, she rose in great surprise to confront the visitor. The servant shut the door, and Anthony came forward.

He did not commit a similar breach of good manners to the one of the previous day; the results of that had shown him that fair stranger-cousins may not be indiscriminately saluted with kisses in England. He bowed, and held out his hand with a frank smile. Mary did not take it: she was utterly puzzled, and stood gazing at him. The likeness in his face to her father's family struck her forcibly. It must be premised that she did not yet know anything about Anthony, or that any such person had made his appearance in England.

“If I understood the name aright—Anthony Castlemaine—you must be, I presume, some relative of my late grandfather's, sir?”

He introduced himself fully then; who he was, and all about it.

Mary met his hand cordially. She never doubted him or his identity for a moment. She had the gift of reading countenances, and she took to the pleasant, honest face at once, so like the Castlemaines in features, but with a more open expression.

"I am *sure* you are my cousin," she said in cordial welcome. "I think I should have known you for a Castlemaine had I seen your face in a crowd."

"I see, myself, how like I am to the Castlemaines, to my father and grandfather: though unfortunately I have not inherited their height and strength," he added, with a slight laugh. "My mother was small and slight: I take after her."

"And my poor Uncle Basil is dead!"

"Alas, yes! Only but a few weeks ago. These black clothes that I wear are in memorial of him."

It was a long while since Miss Castlemaine had met with anyone she liked so well at a first interview, and the quarter of an hour passed quickly. At its end, the servant again appeared, saying his master would see him in his private room: so he was conducted to it.

But, as it seemed, Mr. Peter Castlemaine did not wait to receive him: for almost immediately he presented himself before his daughter.

"This person has been with *you*, I find, Mary Ursula! Very wrong of Stephen to have brought him up here!"

"I am glad he did bring him, papa," was her impulsive answer. "You have no idea what a sensible, pleasant young man he is. I could almost wish he were more even than a cousin—a brother."

"Why, my dear, you must be dreaming!" cried the banker after a pause of astonishment. "Cousin!—brother! It does not do to take strange people on trust in this way. The man may be, and I daresay is, an adventurer: no more related to the Castlemaines than I am related to the King of England."

She laughed. "You may take *him* upon trust, papa, without doubt or fear. He is a Castlemaine all over, save in height. The likeness to grandpapa is wonderful; it is so even to you and to Uncle James. But he says he has all needful credential proofs with him."

The banker, who was then looking from the window, stood fingering the bunch of seals that hung from his long and massive watch-chain, his habit sometimes when in deep thought. Presently he turned.

"You believe, then, my dear, that he is really what he makes himself out to be—Basil's son?"

"Papa, I think there can be no question of it. Rely upon it, the young man is not one who would lay himself out to deceive, or to countenance deception: he is evidently honest and open as the day."

"Well, I am very sorry," returned the banker. "It may bring a great deal of trouble upon James."

"In what way can it bring him trouble, papa?" questioned Mary Ursula in surprise.

"This young man—as I am informed—has come over to put in a claim to Greylands' Rest."

"To Greylands' Rest!" she repeated. "But that is Uncle James's. How can anyone else claim it?"

"People may put in a claim to it; there's no law against that; as I fear this young man means to do," replied the banker. "He may cost James no end of bother and expense."

"But, papa, you must be misinformed. I feel sure his young man is not one who would attempt to claim anything that is not his own."

"But if he supposes it to be his own?"

"What, Greylands' Rest? Papa, how can that be?"

"My dear child, as yet I know almost nothing. Nothing but a few words that Mrs. Castlemaine said to me last night. However, I suppose I must go down and see him."

As soon as Peter Castlemaine entered his private room, and let his eyes rest on the face of the young man who met him so frankly, he saw the great likeness to the Castlemaines. That it was really his nephew, Basil's son, he had entertained little doubt of from the first; none since the recent short interview with his daughter above. With this conviction on his mind, it never would have occurred to him to deny the young man's identity, and he accepted it at once. But though he called him "Anthony," and now and then by mistake "Basil," he did not show any mark of affection, but was distant and cold. Taking his place in his handsome chair, turned sideways to the closed desk, he faced the young man seated before him.

A few minutes were naturally spent in questions and answers, chiefly as to Basil's career abroad. Young Anthony gave every information freely—just as he had done to his Uncle James on the previous day. After that, he passed on to the subject of the inheritance.

"Perhaps, Uncle Peter, you will not refuse to give me some information about my grandfather's estate, 'Greylands' Rest,'" he began. "My father always assured me it would be mine. He said it would come to him at his father's death, and then to me afterwards—"

"He must have spoken without justifiable warranty," interrupted the banker. "It did not necessarily lapse to Basil, or to anyone else. Your grandfather could leave it to whom he would."

"Of course: we never thought otherwise. But my father always said that it would never be left away from him."

"Then I say, that he spoke without sufficient warranty," repeated the banker. "Am I to understand that you have come over to this country to put in a claim to Greylands' Rest, on this sole justification?"

"My father, on his dying bed, charged me to come and claim it, Uncle Peter. It was only then that he learnt his father was dead."

When I presented myself to my Uncle James yesterday, he seemed much to resent the fact that I should put in any claim to the estate ; he told me I had no right to do so ; he said it was his."

"Well?" said the banker ; for the young man had paused.

"Uncle Peter, I am not unreasonable. I come home to find my Uncle James in possession of the estate, and quite ready, as I gather, to oppose my claim to it ; or, I would better say, to treat me and my claim with contempt. Now I do not forget that my grandfather *might* have left it to Uncle James ; that he had the power to do so—"

"Most undoubtedly he had," again interrupted the banker. "And I can tell you, that he never, to the very last, allowed anybody to interfere with his wish and will."

"Well, I say I am not unreasonable, Uncle Peter. I should not attempt to present myself here and lay claim to the estate in the teeth of facts. I told Uncle James so. Once let me be convinced that the estate was really and fairly bequeathed to him, and I would not, for the world, wish to disturb him in its possession. I am not a rogue."

"But he is in possession, Anthony ; and it appears that you do wish to disturb him," remonstrated Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"I beg your pardon ; I think you have not quite caught my meaning. What I want is to be assured that Greylands' Rest was left away from my father. If Uncle James came into it by will, or by legal deed of any kind, let him just *show* me the deed or the will, and that will suffice."

"You doubt his word, then?"

Young Anthony hesitated, before replying ; and then spoke out with ingenuous candour.

"The fact is, Uncle Peter, I deem it *right* to assure myself by proof of how the matter stands ; for my father warned me that there might be treachery—"

"Treachery!" came the quick, echoing interposition of the banker ; his dark eyes flashing fire.

"My father thought it possible," quietly continued the young man ; "he feared that, even though Greylands' Rest was legally mine, my claim to it might be opposed. That is one reason why I press for proof. Another reason is, that I find that doubts were already existing abroad as to how Mr. James Castlemaine came into the estate, and whether it was lawfully his."

"Doubts existing abroad ! Doubts where?"

"Amid the neighbours, the people of Greylands. I have heard one and another talk of it."

"Oh, indeed!" was the cold rejoinder. "Pray where are you staying?"

"At the Dolphin Inn, Uncle Peter. When I descended at it, and saw the flaming dolphin on the sign-board, splashing up the water, I could not help smiling ; for my father had described it to me so accurately, that it seemed like an old acquaintance."

Mr. Peter Castlemaine made no rejoinder, and there ensued a silence. In truth, his own difficulties were so weighty, that they kept pressing on his mind throughout in an undercurrent of trouble.

"Will *you*, Uncle Peter, give me some information of the true state of the case?" resumed the young man. "I came here, purposely intending to ask you. You see, I want to be placed at a certainty, one way or another. I again repeat, that I am not unreasonable; I only ask to be dealt with fairly and honourably. If Greylands' Rest is not mine, show me that it is not; if it is mine, I ought to have it. Perhaps you will tell me, Uncle Peter, how it was left."

The banker suddenly let drop his seals, with which he had been playing during the last appeal, and turned his full attention to the speaker, answering in a more frank tone than he had yet spoken.

"When your father, Basil, went away, he took his full portion with him—a third of the money he would ever inherit. I received my portion; James received his. Nothing remained but Greylands' Rest; and that could be disposed of as your grandfather should please. Does it strike you as any strange thing, Anthony, that he should prefer its passing to the son who was always with him, rather than to the son who had abandoned him and his home, and whom he did not even know to be alive?"

"Uncle Peter, I have said that I see reasons why my grandfather might make his second son his heir, rather than his eldest. If he did so, I am quite ready and willing to accept the fact, once I am convinced of it. *That* I must be. Will you give me the particulars of the bequest? Was the estate devised by will, or by deed of gift?"

"I decline to give you more particulars than I have already given," was the prompt reply of the banker. "The affair is not mine; it is my brother James's. You find him in secure possession of the estate; you are told that it is his; and that ought to suffice. It is a very presumptuous proceeding on the part of Basil's son, to come over in this extraordinary manner, without warning of any kind, and attempt to question the existing state of things. That is my opinion, Anthony."

"Is this your final resolve, Uncle Peter?—not to help me?"

"My final, irrevocable resolve."

Anthony took his hat, and put forth his hand. "I am very sorry, Uncle Peter. It might have saved so much trouble."

The banker shook hands: but he did not ask him to remain, or to call again. "One hint I will give you, Anthony," he said. "Were you to expend your best years and your best energies upon this search you would be no wiser than you are now. The Castlemaines do not brook interference; neither are their affairs conducted in that loose manner that can afford a possibility of their being inquired into. We know how to hold our own."

"I am a Castlemaine too, uncle, and can hold my own with the

best of them. Nothing will turn me from my course in this matter save the proofs I have asked for. Good-day, Uncle Peter."

He put on his coat, and went forth into the street. There he halted; looking this way and that way, as though uncertain of his route.

"A few doors on the right hand, on the other side the market-house," he repeated to himself. "Then I must cross the street, and so onwards."

He crossed over, went on past the market-house, and looked attentively at the doors on the other side. On one of those doors was a brass plate: "Mr. Knivett, attorney-at-law." Anthony Castlemaine rang the bell, asked if the lawyer was at home, and sent in one of his cards,

He was shown into a small back room. At a table, strewn with papers and pens, sat a little old man with a bald head, who was evidently regarding the card with the utmost astonishment. He turned his spectacles on Anthony.

"Do I see Mr. Knivett, the avoué?" he asked, substituting for once a French term for an English one, perhaps unconsciously.

"I am Mr. Knivett, sir, attorney-at-law."

"In the frank, free way that seemed so especially to characterise him Anthony Castlemaine put out his hand, as to a friend.

"You knew my father well, sir. Will you receive his son for old memories' sake?"

"Your father?" asked Mr. Knivett questioningly: but nevertheless meeting the hand with his own.

"Basil Castlemaine. He who went away so long ago from Greylands' Rest."

"Bless my heart!" cried Mr. Knivett, snatching off his glasses in his surprise. "Basil Castlemaine! I never thought to hear of him again. Why it must be—ay, since he left, it must be hard upon five-and-thirty years! Is he come back?"

Anthony had again to go over the old story. His father's doings abroad and his father's death, and his father's charge to him to come home and claim his paternal inheritance: he rehearsed it all. Mr. Knivett, who had put his spectacles on again, never ceased gazing at the relator. Not for a moment did any doubt occur to him that the young man was other than he represented himself to be: the face was the face of a Castlemaine, and of a truthful gentleman.

"But I have come to you, not only to show myself to a friend of my poor father's in his youth, but also as a client," proceeded Anthony, after a short while. "I have need of a lawyer's advice, which I am prepared to pay for according to the charges of the English country. Will you advise me, sir?"

"To be sure," replied Mr. Knivett. "What advice is it that you want?"

"First of all, sir—in the days when my father was at home, you were

the solicitor to my grandfather, old Anthony Castlemaine. Did you continue to be so until his death?"

"I did."

"Then you can, I hope, give me some particulars that I desire to know. To whom was Greylands' Rest bequeathed?—and in what manner was it devised?"

Mr. Knivett shook his head. "I cannot give you any information upon the point," he said. "I must refer you to Mr. Castlemaine."

"I have applied to Mr. Castlemaine, and to Mr. Peter Castlemaine also, and neither of them will tell me anything. They meet me with a point-blank refusal to do so."

"Ah; I daresay. The Castlemaines never choose to be questioned."

"Why will not you afford me the information, Mr. Knivett?"

"For two reasons. First, because the probability is that—pray understand me, young sir; note well what I say—the probability is that I do not possess the information to give you. Secondly, if I did possess it, my relation with the family would preclude my imparting it. I am the attorney to the Castlemaines."

"Their confidential attorney?"

"Some of the business I transact for them is confidential."

"But see here, Mr. Knivett—what am I to do? I come over at the solemn command of my father, delivered to me on his death-bed, to put in my claim to the estate. I find my Uncle James in possession of it. He says it is his. Well and good: I do not say it is quite unlikely to be so. But when I say to him, show me the vouchers for it; the deed or the will that you hold it by, he shuts himself up and says he will not show me anything—that I must be satisfied with his word. Now, is that satisfactory?"

"I daresay it does not appear so to you."

"If there was a will made, let them allow me to see the will; if it was bequeathed by a deed of gift, let me read the deed of gift. Can there be anything more fair than what I ask? If Greylands' Rest is legally my Uncle James's, I should not be so foolish, or so unjust, as to wish to deprive him of it."

Mr. Knivett sat back in his chair, pressing the tips of his fingers together, and politely listening. But comment made he none.

"To go back home, without prosecuting my claim, is what I shall never do, unless I am convinced that I have no claim to prosecute," continued Anthony. "Well, sir, I shall want a legal gentleman to advise me how to set about the investigation of the affair; and hence I come to you."

"I have shown you why I cannot advise you," said Mr. Knivett—and his manner was ever so many shades colder. "I am the attorney to Mr. Castlemaine."

"You cannot help me at all, then?"

"Not at all; in this."

It seemed rather hard to the young man, as he rose from his seat to depart. All he wanted was fair play, open dealing; and he could not get it.

"My Uncle Peter, with whom I have just been, said a thing that I did not like," he stayed to remark; "it rather startled me. I presume—I should think—that he is a man of strict veracity?"

"Mr. Peter Castlemaine? Undoubtedly."

"Well, sir, what he said was this. That were I to spend my best years and energies in the search after information, I should be no wiser at the end than I am now."

"That I believe to be extremely probable," cordially assented the lawyer.

"But do you see the position in which it would leave me? Years and years!—and I am not to be satisfied one way or the other?"

The attorney froze again. "Ah; yes; true."

"Well, sir, I will say good-day to you. And I can only say I wish you had been at liberty to advise me."

They parted; and the young man found himself in the street again. It had been one of the brightest of days; but during this short interview at the lawyer's, the weather seemed to have changed. The skies, as Anthony Castlemaine looked up, were now dull and threatening. He buttoned his warm coat about him, and began his walk back to Greylonds.

"Je crois que nous aurons de la neige," he said, in the familiar language to which he was most accustomed; "et je n'ai pas de parapluie. N'importe; je marcherai vite."

Walk fast! And to Greylonds! Could poor Anthony Castlemaine have foreseen the black pall of Fate, already closing upon him like a shadow, he had turned his steps away from Greylonds for ever.

(*To be continued.*)

TWO DAYS IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE EMPEROR.

WHAT a strange life of vicissitudes was his who has just passed from among us, amid our deep sorrows and regrets—Louis Napoleon, the French Emperor! Born in a royal palace, and dying a private exile from his native land!—that first scene and that closing one were fitting types of the changing circumstances in his career. Now in prison, and then wielding the sceptre of one of the greatest thrones in the world; now obscurely inhabiting what was little better than a garret, and anon swaying the destiny of millions in his robes of purple; the checkered days of Louis Napoleon present a strange lesson on the impotence of man. Earthly sovereigns are great, but overruling Fate is greater.

There were two certain days in his life that exemplified the contrasts of that life in an eminent degree. On Thursday, August the 6th, 1840—as hot a day as the hot sun, blistering the white walls of Boulogne-sur-Mer, ever gave us—an early commotion stirred the town. Now, as I write, I can see the scene; re-live the vague alarm. The heat poured in through the closed green persiennes of the chamber windows; people below were running on and off the port, talking wildly; the drums of the National Guard began to beat to arms. What could be the matter?—what was taking place? A pale servant-maid rushed in with terrified words. “Mon Dieu, on dit que nous sommes pris: que le Prince Louis Napoleon s'est débarqué de la mer avec une grande armée pour prendre la ville!”

It was the day of that mistaken escapade of his, that for him was to end so unfortunately—the landing in Boulogne. The “grande armée” revolved itself into only fifty followers: almost as the girl spoke, the expedition was virtually at an end. Louis Napoleon had come over from London in the “City of Edinburgh,” a hired steamer, with the Count Montholon, General Voisin, and those other few friends, a wild intention in his head of wresting the French crown from Louis Phillippe. But Boulogne was loyal to the Citizen King, and Prince Louis was captured. In attempting to enter the gates of the upper town from the heights, they were closed in his face; it was said by an Englishman who recognized him for Prince Louis; and the Prince and his followers were taken prisoners. Louis Phillippe sent him for trial and he was condemned to perpetual confinement in the fortress of Ham. There he remained six years, and then effected his escape in the disguise of a workman—a carpenter with a plank on his shoulder. For the third time, he took refuge in England, and “waited his time.” In 1852 he was made Emperor.

Monday, the 26th of September, 1853, was a great day for

Dunkerque ; a day that its inhabitants are recalling now with sad regret—for it brought the Emperor and his gracious wife, only a few months married, within its strongly fortified walls. This visit had been expected for some weeks, and various alterations were made in anticipation at the sous-prefecture. That the Emperor and Empress would stay at least a night in the town was taken for granted. The municipal council of Dunkerque met to consider in what manner they could best show their loyalty ; their ladies did the same. Twenty of these French-Flemish dames and twenty demoiselles were selected to form “a court” for the Empress, and they spared no expense to get themselves up accordingly. In the midst of it some terrible news arrived—the Empress was not coming. The ladies rushed to the Sous-Prefecture in wild commotion.

“Is it true ?” they gasped.

“Mon Dieu, oui ! On craint que c'est vrai,” responded madame, the wife of the sous-prefet.

The dames were in despair ; the demoiselles shed tears.

“All our expensive robes ! They'll not be of any use to us : we can never hope for another occasion of wearing them. Court dresses in Dunkerque ! Ma foi ! Point d'espérance !”

“Our lovely white costumes, our wreaths, our flowers !” groaned the “demoiselles d'honneur” in prospective. “Look here ! can't we form a court for the Emperor ?”

But soon another despatch arrived. The Empress was coming.

All the preparations went on. For the decorations of the streets, for the ball at the theatre in the evening, for the music and fireworks of the second day. Everybody expected an invitation to the ball, and everybody got it ; all the French and all the English.

The streets presented a pretty sight. No two were decorated alike. Some were a succession of green bowers—and where the trees and the boughs and the shrubs came from, remained a puzzle always ; for the flat country around was not fertile in such. Wreaths, festoons, and flowers were drooped from pole to pole, from window to window : and large street-chandeliers, peculiar to Dunkerque, composed of little pieces of thick glass, which wave and rattle pleasantly in the breeze, were suspended in the streets. The air was a perfect mass of flags, mostly of the tri-colour, not only flying from the poles and the cords and the festoons, but waving from every window. From three or four houses, inhabited by loyal Englishmen, the glorious British flag, large and powerful, waved out. In the Place Jean Bart tri-coloured draperies of calico, blue, white, and red, were hung round the walls of the houses : flags flew in abundance, and coloured lamps were with them, side by side. No end of eagles, in all the colours of the rainbow, and as brazen as gilt could make them, were hoisted atop of the houses and at the corners of streets. A beautiful triumphal arch, with a colossal

eagle for its summit, was erected at the commencement of the street leading to the park : it looked like a shifting scene in a playhouse. From the top of the high tower, opposite the Grande Eglise, streamed out several long lines of little flags ; they were carried out to a considerable distance, almost at a right angle, and there fastened to the ground. It had a wonderfully pretty effect, looking not unlike wings. At the end of the Rue de l'Eglise, the fishermen erected a triumphal arch, the component parts of the structure being barrels and fishing-nets. On the port was another archway, raised by the harbour workmen ; and this was constructed of wheelbarrows, shovels, and chain pumps.

Sunday, the 25th, was a most bustling day, as it always is in France, and the workmen were busy with their preparations in all parts of the town. But a gloom hung around, for the day was cold, windy, and pouring wet. In spite of the pretty streets and the green shrubs, the draperies and the clusters of coloured lamps, the fine arches and the chandeliers, the flags and the streamers, everybody looked glum ; for, with such weather, what pleasure would there be on the morrow ?

The Emperor and Empress had arrived that morning at St. Omer, their object being to visit the Helfaut camp. People flocked into St. Omer to see them. The royal couple went to the camp in a close carriage. The Emperor mounted a superb charger, to review the troops ; the Empress, with two of her ladies, remained in the carriage. Crowds upon crowds rushed to the camp, and enjoyed themselves there on foot, ladies as well as gentlemen, the rain coming down in torrents, and the slop knee-deep. A worse day could not be imagined. Shoes were lost in the mud, and abandoned ; boots had to be cut off the feet piecemeal ; dresses and bonnets were spoiled for good. "Never mind ourselves," cried the excited and loyal spectators ; "if we are wet, the Emperor's dripping—look at him !" The camp was situated on the plateau of a high and lofty hill, the ascent to which is somewhat formidable ; and French hired horses, and French hired vehicles, and French hired coachmen, not being cast in the adventurous mould, they flatly refused to go up it. So they remained comfortably at the bottom, and the company they had conveyed thither toiled to the top on foot, and walked about the field till the rain streamed off them in bucketfuls—like so many geese.

The wind, which had been desperately high all day at Dunkerque, increased violently towards the evening ; increased with every hour and every minute. The town went to bed at its usual time, but not to sleep : there were few eyes closed in Dunkerque that night, for it was one of terror. Scarcely has a storm of wind been heard more violent. Little children flew shivering into their parents' rooms for protection, as windows were blown in. Heads of families rose, and walked their houses, expecting to see the panes of glass in shatters on the floors.

Those who attempted to sleep got up in the morning from their rocking beds unrefreshed. Bricks were hurled from chimneys, trees torn up by the roots, shutters and windows rent from their fastenings: scarcely, in the remembrance of the oldest inhabitant of Dunkerque, had such a hurricane been known. With the going down of the morning tide, the storm a little abated; but it still blew awfully.

What a sight the unfortunate street decorations presented! It was a scene of desolation. The house-draperies had nearly all disappeared, nobody knew where; a few torn odds and ends were clinging round the chimneys, and flapping away in the wind; the houses were stained blue and red where the draperies had been, for the rain had soaked out their colours; the eagles had come down on the wing; some of the flags fluttered in ribbons, like a furious cat-o'-nine-tails; the leaves were torn off the once lovely green boughs, and were whirling about in the air, thick as a snow storm: whilst the flags looked like a forest of faded leaves in autumn. The festoons were blown to pieces; the greater part of the triumphal arches were destroyed; the much-admired barrel-arch had demolished itself, with a noise and fury seldom heard before, to the excessive terror of the neighbouring houses, who had thought the street was coming down; and the beautiful triumphal arch leading to the park was a heap of ruins, the colossal eagle lying on the ground with its head off, and its gilt wings gone away.

Some of the disasters could not be remedied, for time pressed, and the wind was still in its tantrums, as an English lad phrased it; but all that could be done was done. The rain that day kept off. But the people, from another cause, felt vexed. Dunkerque had gone to an enormous expense; and rumours oozed out that the Imperial pair, instead of remaining a night in the town, dining at the préfecture and "assisting" at the ball, would only stay three hours. The town refused to believe it: but it turned out to be true, nevertheless.

The royal train would arrive at half-past eleven. Long before that hour every window in the line of procession was occupied. Troops in their gay uniforms were pouring up to the railway station, to the music of their fine bands; conspicuous for their attire marched the sapeurs-pompiers in their brazen helmets; bodies of decorated men, deputations from the neighbouring towns, followed; the municipal council of Dunkerque loomed by, in all the grandeur of their official robes; walking with them was a lady, decorated with two medals, for services rendered formerly in the town; old soldiers of the Empire; ancient sailors; children of the public institutions: all advanced in order. The Imperial carriages, which had arrived the previous evening, followed in the midst of an escort; and not the least picturesque of the different objects was a deputation of fishwomen, bearing aloft a net, containing a fish made of silver. They were charmingly attired in their peculiar holiday costume, their light, clear-looking caps spotless as snow; in their

gold ornaments, and long pendent ear-rings ; and their dresses, mostly of chintz, looped up in festoons like a court lady's of former times, displayed petticoats of damask moreen, blue, red, and various colours.

The train came in, to the ringing of bells and firing of cannon ; and the Emperor and Empress made their state entrance into the town. It was a gracious act, on that fearfully windy day, to use an open carriage, leaving the close ones to their attendants. Louis Napoleon—sitting low in the carriage, and looking so much *smaller* than the public had pictured him—seemed very cool and quiet ; his beautiful wife bowed repeatedly. She wore a dark silk dress, a warm shawl, and a fancy straw bonnet. The Emperor was in uniform ; and he looked, in his cocked-hat, as unlike the portraits then out of him as he could well look. There was little cheering ; and perhaps that may account for the Emperor's froideur : I think the people were so preoccupied, looking for the Empress, that they did not recollect to cheer ; certainly it was not from lack of loyalty. They proceeded to the sous-préfecture, which was made the Mairie and the Imperial Palais for the day. As the carriage was turning in at its gates, an English lady at an adjoining window called out in her own tongue, “Long live the Emperor !” and Louis Napoleon looked laughingly up, nodded, and bowed.

Meanwhile, the dames and the demoiselles d'honneur had arrived at the sous-préfecture, with numbers of other French ladies, residents of the town, and were waiting to be presented to the Empress. If the stately carriages, attending a court at St. James's, could but have seen the vehicles (omnibuses amid them) brought into requisition for this ! But the poor Empress, completely worn out with all the journeying and the sight-seeing, was much more thankful to repose a little while upon her bed, than to do the honours of a court. The ladies, however, got presented later.

The Emperor, after the presentations to himself were over, quitted the sous-préfecture in his carriage, attended by M. de Paillard the sous-préfet, and went to inspect the Exposition. From thence he proceeded to the port on foot, braving the wind, where he examined the works going on in the harbour. He had no idea previously that the port and town of Dunkerque were of so much size and importance. English ships, American ships, Russian ships, Turkish ships, besides native vessels, crowded the harbour, some three hundred of them, all carrying their national colours. But the Emperor was suddenly interrupted.

The deputation of fishwomen, in their handsome costumes, came up at this moment, more than thirty of them ; and, joining their hands, inclosed his Majesty in the midst of their circle. It is an old custom of the town when honoured with the presence of its sovereign.

“What would you ?” inquired the Emperor, in surprise.

"We would offer to your Majesty's acceptance a silver fish," replied the spokeswoman by right, a portly, black-eyed dame, the "queen" of the fishmarket, producing a pretty silver fish inclosed in a net of gold wire and green silk. The Emperor graciously accepted the offering.

"What next?" he continued, good-humouredly, finding he was not released.

"We hold another custom in Dunkerque, sire," said the bold dame. "Before you can leave the circle, you must embrace me. When your uncle, the Great Napoleon, was here, he followed it. I had the honour of a kiss from him, and I must have the same from you."

What could the Emperor do? He behaved as a gallant emperor ought, and laughingly gave the kiss, amidst the cheers and roars of the multitude around.

"That is not all yet," proceeded the gratified dame. "We wish to see your beautiful Empress. We have a second fish for her. Will your Majesty courteously give the orders for our admission to her at the sous-préfecture?"

The Emperor hesitated; remembering, probably, the fatigue of his wife; but it was only for a moment: and he said the Empress would be happy to comply with their wishes. So away the pêcheuses started to the sous-préfecture.

The Emperor then went to the Belvedere and the ramparts, and gazed abroad. At the magnificent harbour with its rich freight, the ships rocking about as if they were riding at anchor; at the fine old town behind it; and at the roaring sea, extending so far away into the distance, the waves running mountains high. Not a vessel was to be seen at sea. The Cherbourg fleet, signalled to approach the previous evening, was unable to obey, and had been driven towards the Downs. The "Reine Hortense" alone was at her post: she had arrived before the boisterous weather set in.

But the fish-ladies had, ere this, found their way to the sous-préfecture, and demanded to see the Empress.

"Impossible!" replied one in authority; "you can't see the Empress. And, besides, her Majesty is fatigued, and is lying down."

"We are to see her," retorted the spokeswoman. "You cannot act against the orders of the Emperor."

How long the dispute would have held out is uncertain; but the Emperor drove up, and confirmed the women's statement.

"All these!" cried a renowned general, looking at the thirty women in dismay. "They will frighten the Impératrice. Could not three or four of them enter, as a deputation from the rest?"

"We don't understand anything about your deputations," interrupted the indignant ladies; "we have come to see our sovereign, with his Majesty's permission, and we mean to see her." And, elbowing their way right and left, through generals, officers, préfets, and staff, they

marched up to the audience-chamber ; and from thence were admitted into the presence of the Emperor and Empress.

Their greetings of her Majesty were far more in accordance with the laws of hearty good-will than with those of etiquette. They pushed up and danced about her, full of praises and admiration. The Empress would fain have danced too, and nearly did ; she was almost as delighted as they were, and laughed and enjoyed the scene like a happy young girl. "O comme t'es belle ! comme t'es belle !" uttered they, in their familiar patois.

"It is a pretty present," exclaimed her Majesty, accepting the silver fish, and playing with it. "How frequently, pray, do you catch this sort of fish ?" she asked, smiling.

"Just as often as your Majesty comes to Dunkerque," was the prompt reply. "Comme tu es bellotte, mon Impétrice !" uttered their bold and joking leader : "tu es vraiment bellotte : et je te souhaite un gros garçon !"

The Empress laughed, a ringing laugh ; the Emperor joined in heartily ; and the women, laughing in concert, retired : the Empress ordering them 1000 francs.

Meanwhile, as many as could push in had collected in the cathedral, where a body of priests waited in state for their sovereign ; the church being decorated inside, and its entrance-doors hung with crimson velvet. But while they waited and waited, thinking his Majesty was a long while coming, the hour struck half-past two, and a loud discharge of cannon announced the unwelcome fact that the Imperial couple had left the town again on their route to Calais, without going near the church at all ; and leaving their warm thanks for the manner in which they had been welcomed in Dunkerque.

The ball took place in the evening : but the French ladies asserted that it was "pénible" to see the dais and the two fauteuils unoccupied. There was many a pretty woman there, many a pretty girl ; some of the toilettes were exquisite, and the uniforms, civil and military, glittered in all parts of the throng. The quadrille d'honneur was formed as well as it could be formed, for the crowd ; the sous-préfet taking the first place, in the absence of his Majesty.

Tuesday morning rose beautifully ; the wind having greatly abated. The street decorations had been remodelled and replenished, and countless numbers of coloured lamps were hung, to be illumined at night. An estrade was erected on the Place Jean Bart, all lamps and flags and festoons of flowers and evergreens, intended for the arena of the trial of skill in music. The bands of Dunkerque and of the neighbouring communes assembled, each performing two pieces, chosen at will, and a prize was presented to the band adjudged the best.

With dusk the streets were lighted up ; the illuminations also were general ; they had been only partially so the previous night, on

account of the tempest. A prize was given to the most tastily decorated of the streets. It presented more the appearance of a grove at Vauxhall in old times than a street, so profuse were its evergreens and its clusters of many-coloured lamps; whilst at its extreme end the eye, roaming through verdant arcades, caught a view of the ancient Couvent des Pénitentes brilliantly lighted up. Never in England could we see such a sight as was presented that night by the streets of Dunkerque, for the English do not understand these things.

The fireworks cost 8000 francs, and were let off on the Place Jean Bart. They were indeed magnificent. The air was filled with balls of the most brilliant and varied colours; showers of golden rain; jets of silver. Ere one device had faded away in a succession of ever-changing wonders, another broke forth. Now, would be discovered the letter N, stationary in the midst of revolving stars and prisms of vivid brilliancy; as you looked, the letter dissolved itself into E: here would be shining forth a resplendent crown; there, towering aloft, the Imperial eagle: and the last scene, the "bouquet" rising into the air, and almost seeming to touch the pale stars of ANOTHER hemisphere, was a sight worth remembering for ever.

May the Emperor and Empress come again to Dunkerque! was the aspiration in everybody's mouth: never mind the money.

But they never did come again. And now he, that kindly hearted man, who had ever a good word for England, has passed away to a Kingdom where pomps and vanities, despair and poverty are not; where vicissitudes cannot enter; and where time and change shall be no more.

Peace be with him!

January, 1873.



A CRISIS IN HIS LIFE.

LUNCH-TIME at Oxford, and a sunny day. Instead of college and our usual fare, bread-and-cheese from the buttery, we were looking on the High Street from Mrs. Evert's rooms, and about to sit down to a snow-white damasked table with no end of good things upon it. Madam Sophie had invited four or five of us to lunch with her.

The term had gone on, and Easter was not far off. Tod had not worked much: just enough to keep him out of hot-water. His mind ran on Sophie Chalk more than it did on lectures and chapel. He and the other fellows who were caught by her fascinations mostly spent their spare time there. Sophie dispersed her smiles pretty equally, but Tod contrived to get the largest share. The difference was this: they had lost their heads to her and Tod his heart. The evening card-playing did not flag and the stakes played for were high. Tod and Gaiton were the general losers: a run of ill-luck had set in from the first for both of them. Gaiton might afford this, but Tod could not.

Tod had his moments of reflection. He'd sit sometimes for an hour together, his head bent down, whistling softly to himself some slow dolorous strain, and pulling at his dark whiskers; no doubt pondering the question of what was to be the upshot of it all. For my part, I devoutly wished Sophie Chalk had been caught up into the moon before an ill-wind had wafted her to Oxford. It was an awful shame of her husband to let her stay on there, turning the undergraduates' brains. Perhaps he could not help it.

We sat down to table: Sophie at its head in a fresh-looking pink gown and bracelets and nicknacks. Lord Gaiton and Tod sat on either side of her; Richardson was at the foot, and Fred Temple and I faced each other. What fit of politeness had taken Sophie to invite me, I could not imagine. Possibly she thought I should be sure to refuse; but I did not.

"So kind of you all to honour my poor little table!" said Sophie, as we sat down. "Being in lodgings, I cannot treat you as I should wish. It is all cold: chickens, meat patties, lobster salad, and bread-and-cheese. Lord Gaiton, this is sherry by you, I think. Mr. Richardson, you like porter, I know: there is some on the chiffonier."

We plunged into the dishes without ceremony, each one according to his taste, and the lunch progressed. I may as well mention one thing—that there was nothing in Mrs. Evert's manners at any time to take exception at: never a word was heard from her, never a look seen, that could offend even an old dowager. She made the most of her charms

and her general fascinations, and flirted quietly ; but all in a lady-like way.

"Thank you, yes ; I think I will take a little more salad, Mr. Richardson," she said to him with a beaming smile. "It is my dinner, you know. I have not a hall to dine in to-night, as you gentlemen have. I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Johnny."

I was holding her plate for Richardson. There happened at that moment to be a lull in the talking, and we heard a carriage of some kind stop at the door, and a loud peal at the house-bell.

"It's that brother of mine," said Fred Temple. "He bothered me to drive out to some confounded place with him, but I told him I'd not. What's he bumping up the stairs in that fashion for?"

The room door was flung open, and Fred Temple put on a savage face, for his brother looked after him more than he liked ; when, instead of Temple major, there appeared a shining big brown satin bonnet, and an old lady's face under it, who stood there with a walking-stick.

"Yes, you see I was right, grandmamma ; I said she was not gone," piped out a shrill voice behind ; and Mabel Smith, in an old-fashioned black silk frock and tippet, came into view. They had driven up to look after Sophie.

Sophie was equal to the occasion. She rose gracefully and held out both her hands, as though they had been welcome as is the sun in harvest. The old lady leaned on her stick, and stared around : the many faces seemed to confuse her.

"Dear me ! I did not know you had got a party to dinner, ma'am."

"Just two or three friends who have dropped in to partake of a little luncheon, Mrs. Golding," said Sophie, airily. "Let me take your stick."

The old lady, who looked like a very amiable old lady, sat down in the nearest chair, but kept the stick in her hand. Mabel Smith was regarding everything with her shrewd eyes and compressing her thin lips.

"This is Johnny Ludlow, grandmamma ; you have heard me speak of *him* : I don't know the others."

"How do you do, sir," said the old lady, politely nodding her brown bonnet at me. "I hope you are in good health, sir ?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you." For she put it as a question, and seemed to await an answer. Tod and the rest, who had risen, began to sit down again.

"I'm sure I am sorry to disturb you at dinner, ma'am," said the old lady to Mrs. Evert. "We came in to see whether you had gone home or not. I said you of course had gone ; that you'd not stay away from your husband so long as this ; and also because we had not heard of you for a month past. But Mabel thought you were here still."

"I am intending to return shortly," said Sophie.

"That's well : for I want to send up Mabel. And I brought in a letter

that came to my house this morning, addressed to you," continued the old lady, lugging out of her pocket a small collection of articles before she found the letter. "Mabel says it is your husband's handwriting, ma'am; if so, he must be thinking you are staying with me."

"Thanks," said Sophie, slipping the letter away unopened.

"Had you not better see what it says?" suggested Mrs. Golding to her.

"Not at all: it can wait. May I offer you some luncheon?"

"Much obligeed, ma'am, but I and Mabel took an early dinner before setting out—some hot mutton-chops. And on which day, Mrs. Everyt, do you purpose going?"

"I'll let you know," said Sophie.

"What can have kept you so long here?" continued the old lady, wonderingly. "Mabel said you did not know any of the inhabitants."

"I have found it of service to my health," replied Sophie with charming simplicity. "Will you take a glass of sherry, Mrs. Golding?"

"I don't mind if I do. Just half a glass. Thank you, sir; not much more than half"—to me, as I went forward with the glass and decanter. "I'm sure, sir, it is good of you to be attentive to an old lady like me. If you had a mind for a brisk walk at any time, of three miles, or so, and would come over to my house, I'd make you welcome. Mabel, write down the address."

"And I wish you had come while I was there, Johnny Ludlow," said the girl, giving me the paper. "I like you. You don't say smiling words to people with your mouth and mock at them in your heart, as some do."

I remembered that she had not been asked to take any wine, and I offered it.

"No, thank you," she said with emphasis. "None for me." And it struck me that she refused because the wine belonged to Sophie.

The old lady, after nodding a farewell around and shaking hands with Mrs. Everyt, stood leaning on her stick between the doorway and the stairs. "My servant's not here," she said, looking back, "and these stairs are steep: would anybody be good enough to help me down?"

Tod went forward to give her his arm; and we heard the fly drive away with her and Mabel. Somehow the interlude had damped the free go of the banquet, and we soon prepared to depart also. Sophie made no attempt to hinder it, but said she should expect us in to take some tea with her in the evening: and the lot of us filed out together, some going one way, some another. I and Fred Temple kept together.

There was a good-natured fellow at Oxford that term, who had come up from Wales to take his degree, and had brought his wife with him, a nice kind of young girl who put me in mind of Anna Whitney. They had become acquainted with Sophie Chalk, and liked her; she fascinated both. She meant to do it too: for the companionship of staid, irre-

proachable people like Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns, reflected credit on herself in the eyes of Oxford.

"I thought we should have met the Ap-Jenkynses, at lunch," remarked Temple. "What a droll old party that was with the stick ! She put me in mind of—I say, here's another old party !" he broke off. "Seems to be a friend of yours."

It was Mrs. Cann. She had stopped, evidently wanting to speak to me.

"I have just been to put little Nanny Tasson in the train for London, sir," she said ; "I thought you might like to know it. Her eldest brother, the one that's settled there, has taken to her. His wife wrote a nice letter and sent the fare."

"All right, Mrs. Cann. I hope they'll take good care of her. Good-afternoon."

"Who the wonder is Nanny Tasson ?" cried Temple as we went on.

"Only a little friendless child. Her brother was our scout when we first came, and he died."

"Oh, by Jove, Ludlow ! Look there !"

I turned at Temple's words. A gig was dashing by as large as life ; Tod in it, driving Sophie Chalk. Behind it dashed another gig, containing Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns. Fred Temple laughed.

"Mrs. Everty's unmistakably charming," said he, "and we don't know any real harm of her, but if I were Ap-Jenkyns I should not let my wife be quite her bosom companion. As to Todhetley, I think he's a gone calf."

Whitney came to our room as I got in. He had been invited to the luncheon by Mrs. Everty, but excused himself, and she asked Fred Temple in his place.

"Well, Johnny, how did it go off ?"

"Oh, pretty well. Lobster-salad and other good things. Why did not you go ?"

"Where's Tod ?" he rejoined, not answering the question.

"Out on a driving-party. Sophie Chalk and the Ap-Jenkynses."

Whitney whistled through the verse of an old song : "Froggy would a-wooing go." "I say, Johnny," he said presently, "you had better give Tod a hint to take care of himself. That thing will go too far if he does not look out."

"As if Tod would mind me ! Give him the hint yourself, Bill."

"I said half a word to him this morning after chapel : he turned on me and accused me of being jealous."

We both laughed.

"I got a letter from home yesterday," Bill went on. "Ordering me to keep clear of Madam Sophie."

"No ! Who from ?"

"The mother. And Miss Deveen, who is staying with them, put in a postscript."

"How did they know Sophie Chalk was here?"

"Through me. One wet afternoon I wrote a long epistle to Harry, telling him, amidst other items, that Sophie Chalk was here, turning some of our heads, especially Todhetley's. Harry, like a flat, let Helen get hold of the letter, and she read it aloud, *pro bono publico*. There was nothing in it that I might not have written to Helen herself; but Mr. Harry won't get another from me in a hurry. Sophie seems to have fallen to a discount with the mother and Miss Deveen."

Bill Whitney did not know what I knew—the true story of the emeralds.

"And that's why I did not go to the lunch to-day, Johnny. Who's this?"

It was the scout. He came in to bring in a small parcel, daintily done up in white paper.

"Something for you, sir," he said to me. "A boy has just left it."

"It can't be for me—that I know of. It looks like wedding-cake."

"Open it," said Bill. "Perhaps one of the grads has gone and got married."

We opened it together, laughing. A tiny pasteboard box loomed out with a jeweller's name on it; inside it was a chased gold cross, attached to a slight gold chain.

"It's a mistake, Bill. I'll do it up again."

Tod came back in time for dinner. Seeing the little parcel on the mantel-shelf, he asked what it was. So I told him—something that the jeweller's shop must have sent to our room by mistake. Upon that, he tore the paper open; called the shop people hard names for sending it into college, and put the box in his pocket. Which showed that it was for him.

I went to Sophie's in the evening, having promised her, but not as soon as Tod, for I stayed to finish some Greek. Whitney went with me, in spite of his orders from home. The luncheon party had all assembled there with the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns. Sophie sat behind the tea-tray, dispensing her tea; Gaiton handed the plum-cake. She wore a silken robe of opal tints; white lace fell over her wrists and bracelets; in her hair, brushed off her face, fluttered a butterfly with silver wings; and on her neck was the chased gold cross that had come to our rooms a few hours before.

"Tod's just a fool, Johnny," said Whitney in my ear. "Upon my word, I think he is. And she's a syren!—and it was at our house he met her first!"

After Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns left, for she was tired, they began cards. Sophie was engrossing Gaiton, and Tod sat down to *écarté*. He refused at first, but Richardson drew him on.

"I'll show Tod the letter I had from home," said Whitney to me as we went out. "What can possess him to go and buy gold crosses for her? She's married."

"Gaiton and Richardson buy her things also, Bill."

"They don't know how to spend their money fast enough. I wouldn't: I know that."

Tod and Gaiton came in together soon after I got in. Gaiton just looked in to say good-night, and proposed that we should breakfast with him on the morrow, saying he'd ask Whitney also: and then he went up to his own rooms.

Tod fell into one of his thinking fits. He had work to do, but he sat staring at the fire, his legs stretched out. With all his carelessness he had a conscience and some forethought. I told him Bill Whitney had had a lecture from home, touching Sophie Chalk, and I conclude he heard. But he made no sign.

"I wish to goodness you'd not keep up that tinkling, Johnny," he said by-and-by, in a tone of irritation.

The "tinkling" was a bit of quiet harmony. However, I shut down the piano, and went and sat by the fire, opposite to him. His brow looked troubled; he was running his hands through his hair.

"I wonder whether I could raise some money, Johnny," he began, after a bit.

"How much money?"

"A hundred, or so."

"You'd have to pay a hundred and fifty for doing it."

"Confound it, yes! And besides—"

"Besides what?"

"Nothing."

"Look here, Tod: we should have gone on as straightly and steadily as need be but for *her*. As it is, you are wasting your time and getting out of the way of work. What's going to be the end of it?"

"Don't know myself, Johnny."

"Do you ever ask yourself?"

"Where's the use of asking?" he returned, after a pause. "If I ask it of myself at night, I forget it by the morning."

"Pull up at once, Tod. You'd be in time."

"Yes, now: don't know that I shall be much longer," said Tod candidly. He was in a soft mood that night; an unusual thing with him. "Some awful complication may come of it: a few wrats or something."

"Sophie Chalk can't do you any good, Tod."

"She has not done me any harm."

"Yes she has. She has unsettled you from the work that you came to Oxford to do; and the play in her rooms has caused you to run into debt that you don't know how to get out of: it's nearly as much harm as she can do you."

"Is it?"

"As much as she can do any honest fellow. Tod, if you were to

lapse into crooked paths, you'd break the good old Pater's heart. There's nobody in the world he cares for as he cares for you."

Tod sat twitching his whiskers. I could not understand his mood : all the carelessness and the fierceness had quite gone out of him.

"It's the thought of the father that pulls me up, lad. What a cross-grained world it is ! Why should a bit of pleasure be hedged in with thorns ?"

"If we don't go to bed we shall not be up for chapel."

"*You* can go to bed."

"Why do you drive her out, Tod ?"

"Why does the sun shine ?" was the lucid answer.

"I saw you with her in that gig to-day."

"We only went four miles. Four out and four in."

"You may be driving her rather too far some day—fourteen, or so."

"I don't think she'd be driven. With all her simplicity, she knows how to take care of herself."

Simplicity ! I looked at him ; and saw he spoke the word in good faith. *He* was simple.

"She has got a husband, Tod."

"Well ?"

"Do you suppose he would like to see you driving her abroad ?—and all you fellows in her rooms to the last minute any of you dare stop out ?"

"That's not my affair. It's his."

"Any way, Everyt might come down upon the lot of you some of these fine days, and say things you'd not like. *She's* to blame. Why, you heard what that old lady in the brown bonnet said—that her husband must think Sophie was staying with her."

"The fire's low, and I'm cold," said Tod. "Good-night, Johnny."

He went into his room, and I to mine.

A few years ago, there appeared a short poem called "Amor Mundi."* While reading it, I involuntarily recalled this past experience at Oxford, for it described a young fellow's setting-out on the downward path, as Tod did. Two of life's wayfarers start on their long life journey : the woman first ; the man sees and joins her ; then speaks to her.

"Oh, where are you going, with your love-locks flowing,
And the west wind blowing along the narrow track ?"

"This downward path is easy, come with me, an' it please ye ;
We shall escape the up-hill by never turning back."

So they two went together in the sunny August weather ;
The honey-blooming heather hay to the left and right :
And dear she was to dote on, her small feet seemed to float on
The air, like soft twin-pigeons too sportive to alight.

And so they go forth, these two, on their journey, revelling in the

* Christina G. Rossetti.

summer sunshine and giving no heed to their sliding progress ; until he sees something in the path that startles him. But the syren accounts for it in some plausible way ; it lulls his fear, and onward they go again. In time he sees something worse, halts, and asks her again :

“ Oh, what’s that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow ? ”
“ Oh that’s a thin dead body that waits the Eternal term.”

The answer effectually arouses him, and he pulls up in terror, asking her to turn. She answers again, and he knows his fate.

“ Turn again, oh my sweetest ! Turn again, false and fleetest !
This way, whereof thou sweetest, is surely Hell’s own track ! ”
“ Nay, too late for cost counting, nay too steep for hill-mounting,
This downward path is easy, but there’s no turning back.”

Shakspeare tells us that there is a tide in the affairs of man, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune : omitted, all the voyage of the after life is spent in shoals and miseries. That will apply to other things besides fortune. I fully believe that after a young fellow has set out on the downward path, in almost all cases there’s a chance given him of pulling up again, if he only is but sufficiently wise and firm to seize upon it. The opportunity was to come for Tod. He had started ; there was no doubt of that ; but he had not got down very far yet and could go backward almost as easily as forward. Left alone, he would probably make a sliding run of it, and descend in the shoals. But the chance for him was at hand.

Our commons and Whitney’s went up to Gaiton’s room in the morning, and we breakfasted there. Lecture that day was at eleven, but I had work to do beforehand. So had Tod, for the matter of that ; plenty of it. I went down to mine, but Tod stayed up with the two others.

Bursting into our room, as a fellow does when he is late for anything, I saw at the open window somebody that I thought must be Mr. Brandon’s ghost. It took me aback, and for a moment I stood staring.

“ Have you no greeting for me, Johnny Ludlow ? ”

“ I was lost in surprise, sir. I am very glad to see you.”

“ I daresay you are ! ” he returned, as if he doubted my word. “ It’s a good half-hour that I have waited here. You’ve been at a breakfast party ! ”

He must have got that from the scout. “ Not at a party, sir. Gaiton asked us to take our commons up, and breakfast with him in his room.”

“ Who is Gaiton ? ”

“ He is Lord Gaiton. One of the students at Christchurch.”

“ Never mind his being a lord. Is he any good ? ”

I could not say Gaiton was particularly good, so passed the question over, and asked Mr. Brandon when he came to Oxford.

“ I got here at mid-day yesterday. How are you getting on ? ”

"Oh very well, sir."

"Been in any rows?"

"No, sir."

"And Todhetley? How is he getting on?"

I should have said very well to this; it would never have done to say very ill, but Tod and Bill Whitney interrupted the answer. They looked just as much surprised as I had been. After talking a bit, Mr. Brandon left, saying he should expect us all three at the Mitre in the evening when dinner in Hall was over.

"What the deuce brings him at Oxford?" cried Tod.

Whitney laughed. "I'll lay a crown he has come to look after Johnny and his morals."

"After the lot of us," added Tod, pushing his books about. "Look here, you two. I'm not obliged to go bothering to that Mitre in the evening, and I shan't. You'll be enough without me."

"It won't do, Tod," I said. "He expects you."

"What if he does? I have an engagement elsewhere."

"Break it."

"I shall not do anything of the kind. There! Hold your tongue, Johnny, and push the ink this way."

Tod held to that. So when I and Whitney reached the Mitre after dinner, we said he was unable to get off a previous engagement, putting the excuse as politely as we could.

"Oh," said old Brandon, twitching his yellow silk handkerchief off his head, for he had been asleep before the fire. "Engaged elsewhere, is he! With the lady I saw him driving out yesterday, I suppose: a person with blue feathers on her head."

This struck us dumb. Bill said nothing, neither did I.

"It was a Miss Sophie Chalk, I presume," went on old Brandon, ringing the bell. "Sit down, boys; we'll have tea up."

The tea and coffee must have been ordered before-hand, for they came in at once. Mr. Brandon drank four cups of tea, and ate a plate of bread-and-butter and some watercress.

"Tea is my best meal in the day," he said. "You young fellows all like coffee best. Don't spare it. What's that by you, William Whitney? —anchovy toast? Cut that pound-cake, Johnny."

Nobody could say, with all his strict notions, that Mr. Brandon was not hospitable. He'd have ordered up the Mitre's whole larder had he thought we could eat it. And never another word did he say about Tod until the things had gone away.

Then he began, quietly at first: he sitting on one side the fire, I and Bill on the other. Touching gently on this, alluding to that, our eyes opened in more senses than one; for we found that he knew all about Sophie Chalk's sojourn in the town, the attention she received from the undergraduates, and Tod's infatuation.

"What's Todhetley's object in going there?" he asked.

"Amusement, I think, sir," hazarded Bill.

"Does he gamble there for amusement too?"

Where on earth had old Brandon got hold of all this?

"How much has Todhetley lost already?" he continued. "He is in debt, I know. Not for the first time from the same cause."

Bill stared. He knew nothing of that old episode in London with the Clement-Pells. I felt my face flush.

"Tod does not care for playing really, sir. But the cards are there, and he sees others play and gets drawn-in to join."

"Well, what amount has he lost this time, Johnny?"

"I don't know, sir."

"But you know that he is in debt?"

"I—yes, sir. Perhaps he is a little."

"Look here, boys," said old Brandon. "Believing that matters were not running in a satisfactory groove with some of you, I came down to Oxford yesterday to look about me a bit—for I don't intend that Johnny Ludlow shall lapse into bad ways, if I can keep him out of them. Todhetley may have made up his mind to go to the deuce, but he shall not take Johnny with him. I hear no good report of Todhetley; he neglects his studies for the sake of a witch, and is in debt over his head and shoulders."

"Who could have told you that, sir?"

"Never you mind, Johnny Ludlow; I daresay you know it's pretty true. Now look here—as I said just now. I mean to see what I can do towards saving Todhetley, for the sake of my good old friend, the Squire, and for his dead mother's sake; and I appeal to you both to aid me. You can answer my questions if you will; and you are not children, that you should make an evasive pretence of ignorance. If I find matters are too hard for me to cope with, I shall send for the Squire and Sir John Whitney; their influence may effect what mine cannot. If I can deal with the affair successfully, and save Todhetley from himself, I'll do so, and say nothing about it anywhere. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. To begin with, what amount of debt has Todhetley got into?"

It seemed to be a choice of evils: but the least of them was to speak. Bill honestly said he would tell in a minute if he knew. I knew little more than he; only that Tod had been saying the night before he wished he could raise a hundred pounds.

"A hundred pounds!" repeated old Brandon, nodding his head a dozen times like a Chinese mandarin. "Pretty well, that, for a first term at Oxford. Well, we'll leave that for the present, and go to other questions. What snare and delusion is drawing him on to make

visits to this person, this Sophie Chalk? What does he purpose? Is it marriage?"

Marriage! Bill and I both looked up at him.

"She is married already, sir. Did you not know it?"

"Married already! Who says so?"

So I told him all about it—as much as I knew—and that her husband, Mr. Everyt, had been to Oxford once or twice to see her.

"Well, that's a relief," cried Mr. Brandon, drawing a deep breath, as though a fear of some kind had been lifted from his mind. And then he fell into a reverie, his head nodding incessantly, and his yellow handkerchief in his hand keeping time to it.

"If it's better in one sense, it's worse in another," he squeaked. "Todhetley's in love with her, I suppose!"

"Something like it, sir," said Bill.

"What brainless fools some of you young men can be!"

But it was then on the stroke of nine, when Old Tom would peal out. Mr. Brandon hurried us away: he seemed to understand the notions o University life as well as we did: ordering us to say nothing to Tod, as he intended to speak to him on the morrow.

And we concluded that he did. Tod came stalking in during the afternoon in a white rage with somebody, and I thought it might be with old Brandon.

The time passed. Mr. Brandon stayed on at the Mitre as though he meant to make it his home for good, and was evidently watching. Tod seemed to be conscious of it, and to exist in a chronic state of irritation. Sophie Chalk stayed on also, and Tod was there more than ever. The affair had got wind somehow—I mean Tod's infatuation for her—and was talked of in the colleges. Richardson fell ill about that time: at least, he met with an accident which confined him to his bed: and the play at Mrs. Everyt's was not much to speak of: I did not go, Mr. Brandon had interdicted it. Thus the time went on, and Passion Week was coming in.

"Are you running for a wager, Johnny Ludlow?"

I was running down to the river and had nearly run over Mr. Brandon, who was strolling along with his hands under his coat-tails. It was Saturday afternoon, and some of us were going out rowing. Mr. Brandon came down to see us embark.

As we all stood there, who should loom into sight but Sophie Chalk! She was leading a little mouse-coloured dog by a piece of red tape; one that Fred Temple had given her; and her shining hair was a sight to be seen in the sunlight; Tod walked by her with his arms folded. They halted to talk with some of us for a minute, and then went on, Madam Sophie giving old Brandon a saucy stare from her wide-open blue eyes. He had stood as still as a post, giving never a word to either of them.

That same night, when Tod and I were in our room alone, Mr. Brandon walked in. It was pretty late, but Tod was about to depart on his visit to High Street. As if the entrance of Mr. Brandon had been the signal for him to bolt, he put on his trencher and turned to the door. Quick as thought, Mr. Brandon interposed himself.

"If you go out of this room, Joseph Todhetley, it shall be over my body," cried he, a whole hatful of authority in his squeaky voice. "I have come in to hold a final conversation with you; and I mean to do it."

I thought an explosion was inevitable, with Tod's temper. He controlled it, however; and after a moment's hesitation put off his cap. Mr. Brandon sat down in the old big chair by the fire; Tod stood on the other side, his arm on the mantelpiece.

In a minute or two, they were going at it kindly. Old Brandon put Tod's doings before him in the plainest language he could command; Tod retorted insolently in his passion.

"I have warned you enough against your ways and against that woman," said Mr. Brandon. "I am here to do it once again, and to bid you for the last time give up her acquaintanceship. Yes, sir, bid you: I stand in the light of your unconscious father."

"I'd not do it for my father," cried Tod, in his fury.

"She is leading you into a gulf of—of brimstone," fired old Brandon. "Day by day you creep down a step lower into it, sir, like a calf that is being wiled to the shambles. Once fairly in, you'll be smothered: the whole world won't be able to pull you out again."

Tod answered with a torrent of words. The chief burden of them was—that if he chose to walk into the brimstone, it was not Mr. Brandon who should keep him out of it.

"Is it not?" retorted Mr. Brandon—and though he was very firm and hard, he gave no sign of losing his temper. "We'll see that. I am in this town to strive to save you, Joseph Todhetley; and if I can't do it by easy means, I'll do it by hard ones. I got you out of one scrape, thanks to Johnny here, and now I'm going to get you out of another."

Tod held his peace. That past obligation was often on his conscience.

"You ought to take shame to yourself, sir," continued old Brandon. "You were placed at Oxford to study, to learn to be a man and a gentleman, to prepare yourself to fight well the battle of life, not to waste the talents God has given you, and fritter away your best days in sin."

"In sin?" retorted Tod, jerking his head fiercely.

"Yes, sir, in sin. What else do you call it—this idleness that you are indulging in? The short space of time that young men spend at the University must be used, not abused. Once it has passed, it can never again be laid hold of. What sort of example are you setting my ward here, who is as your younger brother?—Stay where you are, Johnny Ludlow. I choose that you shall be present at this."

"Johnny need not fret himself that he'll catch much harm from my niquities," said Tod with a sneer.

"Now listen to me, young man," spoke Mr. Brandon. "If you persist in this insane conduct and refuse to hear reason, I'll keep you out of danger by putting you in prison."

Tod stared.

"You owe me a hundred pounds."

"I am quite conscious of that, sir; and of my inability hitherto to repay it."

"For that debt I will shut you up in prison. Headstrong young idiots like you must be saved from themselves."

Tod laughed slightly in his insolence. A defiant, mocking laugh.

"I should like to see you try to shut me up in prison! You have no power to do it, Mr. Brandon: you have never proved the debt."

Mr. Brandon rose, and took a step towards him. "You dare to tell me I cannot do a thing that I say I will do, Joseph Todhetley! I shall make an affidavit before a judge in chambers that you are about to leave the country, and obtain the warrant that will lock you up. And I say to you that I believe you are going to leave it, sooner or later; and that Chalk woman with you!"

"What an awful lie," cried Tod, his face all ablaze.

"Lie or no lie, I believe it. I believe it is what she will bring you to, unless you are speedily separated from her. And if there be no other way of saving you, why, I'll save you by force."

Tod ran his hands through his damp hair: what with wrath and emotion he was in a fine heat. Knowing nothing of the law himself, he supposed old Brandon could do as he said, and it sobered him.

"I am your father's friend, Joseph Todhetley, and I'll take care of you for his sake if I can. I have stayed on here, putting myself, as it were, into his place to save him pain. As his substitute, I have a right to be heard; ay, and to act. Do you know that your dead mother was very dear to me? I will tell you what perhaps I never should have told you but for this crisis in your life, that her sister was to me the dearest friend a man can have in this life; she would have been my wife but that death claimed her. Your mother was nearly equally dear, and loved me to the last. She took my hand in dying, and spoke of you; of you, her only child. 'Should it ever be in your power to shield him from harm or evil, do so, John,' she said, 'do it for my sake.' And with Heaven's help, I will do it now."

Tod was moved. The mention of his mother softened him at all times. Mr. Brandon sat down again.

"Don't let us play at this pitched battle, Joe. Hear a bit of truth from me, of common sense: can't you see that I have your interest at heart? There are two roads that lie before a young man on his setting out in life, either of which he can take: you can take either, even yet.

The one leads to honour, to prosperity, to a clear conscience, to a useful career, to a hale and happy old age—and, let us hope, to heaven. The other leads to vice, to discomfort, to miserable self-torment, to a waste of talent and energies ; in short, to altogether a lost life. Lost, at any rate, for this world : and—we'll not speculate upon what it may be in the other. Are you attending ?

Tod just lifted his eyes in answer. I sat at the table by my books, silently turning some of their leaves, ready to drop through the floor with annoyance. Mr. Brandon resumed.

“ You have come to the Oxford University to perfect your education ; to acquire self-reliance, experience, and a tone of good manners ; to keep upright ways, to eschew bad company, and to train yourself to be a Christian gentleman. Do this, and you will go home with satisfaction and a sound conscience. In time you will marry, and rear your children to good, and be respected of all men. This is the career expected of you ; this is the road you ought to take.”

He paused slightly, and then went on.

“ I will put the other road before you ; the one you seem so eager to rush upon. Ah, boy ! how many a one, with as hopeful a future before him as you have, has gone sliding, sliding down unconsciously, never meaning, poor fellow, to slide too far, and been lost in the vortex of sin and shame ! You are starting on well for it. Wine and cards, and betting, and debt ; and a singing mermaid to lure you on ! That woman, with the hard light eyes, and the seductive airs, has cast her spell upon you. You think her an angel no doubt ; I say she's more of an angel's opposite —”

“ Mr. Brandon ! ”

“ There are women in the world who will conjure a man's coat off his back, and his pockets after it,” persisted Mr. Brandon, drowning the interruption. “ She is one. They are bad to the core. They are ; and they draw a man into all kinds of irretrievable entanglements. She will draw you : and the end may be that you'd find her saddled on you for good. Who will care to take your hand in friendship then ? Will you dare to clasp that of honest people, or hold up your face in the light of day ? No : not for very shame. That's what gambling and evil courses will bring a man to : and, his self-respect once gone, it's gone for ever. You will feel that you have raised a barrier between you and your kind : remembrance will be a sting, and your days will be spent in one long cry of too late repentance, ‘ Oh, that I had been wise in time ! ’ ”

“ You are altogether mistaken in her,” burst out Tod. “ There's no harm in her. She is as particular as—as any lady need be.”

“ No harm in her ! ” retorted Mr. Brandon. “ Is there any good in her ? Put it at its best : she induces you to waste your time and your substance. How much money has the card-playing and the present-

giving taken out of you, pray? What amount of debt has it involved you in? More than you know how to pay."

Tod winced.

"Be wise in time, lad, now, without further delay, and break off this dangerous connection. I know that in your better moments you must see how fatal it may become. It is a crisis in your life; it may be its turning point; and, as you choose the evil or the good, so may you be lost or saved in this world and in eternity."

Tod muttered something about his not deserving to be judged so harshly.

"I judge you not harshly yet: I say that evil will come unless you flee from it," said Mr. Brandon. "Don't you care for yourself?—for your good name? Is it nothing to you whether you turn out a scamp or a gentleman?"

To look at Tod just then, it was a great deal.

"Have you any reverence for your father?—for the memory of your mother? Then you will do a little violence to your own inclinations, even though it be hard and difficult—more difficult than to get a double first; harder than having the worst tooth in your head drawn—and take your leave of that lady for ever. For your own sake, Joe; for your own sake!"

Tod was pulling gently at his whiskers.

"Send all folly to the wind, Joseph Todhetley! Say to yourself, for God and myself will I strive henceforth! It only needs a little steady resolution; and you can call it up if you choose. You shall always find a friend in me. Write down on a bit of paper the sums you owe, and I'll give you a cheque to cover them. Come, shake hands upon it."

"You are very kind, sir," gasped Tod, letting his hand meet old Brandon's.

"I hope you will let me be kind. Why, lad, you should have had more spirit than to renew an acquaintanceship with a false girl; an adventurer, who has gone about the country stealing jewels."

"Stealing jewels!" echoed Tod.

"Stealing jewels, lad. Did you never know it? She took Miss Deveen's emeralds at Whitney Hall."

"Oh, that was a mistake," said Tod, cheerfully. "She explained it to me."

"A mistake, was it! Explained it to you, did she! When?"

"At Oxford: before she had been here above a day or two. She introduced the subject herself, sir, saying she supposed I had heard something about it, and what an absurd piece of business the suspecting her was; altogether a mistake."

"Ah, she's a wily one, Joe," said Mr. Brandon. "Johnny Ludlow could have told you whether it was a mistake or not. Why boy, she stole the stones out of Miss Deveen's own dressing-room, and went up

to London the next day, or the next but one, and pledged them the same night at a pawnbroker's, in a false name, and gave a false account of herself. Moreover, when it was brought home to her, she confessed all upon her knees to Miss Deveen, and sued for mercy."

Tod looked from Mr. Brandon to me. At the time of the discovery, he had had a hint given him of the fact, with a view of more effectually weaning him from Sophie Chalk, but not the particulars.

"It's true, Todhetley," said Mr. Brandon, nodding his head. "You may judge, therefore, whether she is a nice kind of person for you to be seen beausing about Oxford streets in the face and eyes of the Dons." And Tod winced again, and bit his lips.

Mr. Brandon rose, taking both Tod's hands in his, and said a few solemn words in the kindest tone I had ever heard him speak; wrung his hands, nodded good-night to me, and was gone. Tod walked about the room a bit, whistling softly to make a show of indifference, and looking miserably cut up.

"Is what he said true?" he asked me presently, stopping by the mantelpiece again: "about the emeralds?"

"Every word of it."

"Then why on earth could you not open your mouth and tell me, Johnny Ludlow?"

"I thought you knew it. I'm sure you were told of it at the time. Had I brought up the matter again later, you'd have been fit to punch me into next week, Tod."

"Let's hear the details—shortly."

I went over them all; shortly, as he said; but omitting none. Tod stood in silence, never once interrupting.

"Did the Whitneys know of this?"

"Anna did."

"Anna!"

"Yes. Anna had suspected Sophie from the first. She saw her steal out of Miss Deveen's room, and saw her sewing something into her stays at bedtime. But Anna kept it to herself until discovery had come."

Tod could frown pretty well on ordinary occasions, but I never saw a frown like the one on his brow as he listened. And I thought—I thought—it was meant for Sophie Chalk.

Lady Whitney, I expect, knows it all now, Tod. Perhaps Helen also. Old Brandon went over to the Hall to spend the day, and it was in consequence of what he heard from Lady Whitney and Miss Deveen that he came down here to look us up."

"Meaning *me*," said Tod. "Not us. Use right words, Johnny."

"They did not know, you see, that Sophie Chalk was married. And they must have noticed that you cared for her."

Tod made no comment. He just leaned against the shelf in silence. I was stacking my books.

"Good-night, Johnny," he quietly said, without any appearance of resentment; and went into his room.

The next day was Palm Sunday. Tod lay in bed with a splitting headache, could not lift his head from the pillow, and his skin was as sallow as an old gander's. "Glad to hear it," said Mr. Brandon, when I told him; "it will give him a quiet day for reflection."

A surprise awaited me that morning, and Mr. Brandon also. Miss Deveen was at Oxford, with Helen and Anna Whitney. They had arrived the evening before, and meant to stay and go up with Bill and with us. I did not tell Tod: in fact, he seemed too ill to be spoken to, his head covered with the bedclothes.

You can't see many a finer sight than the Broad Walk presents on the evening of Palm Sunday. Everybody promenades there, from the Dean downwards. Our party went together: Miss Deveen, Helen, and Anna; Bill, I, and Mr. Brandon.

We were in the middle of the walk; and it was at its fullest, when Tod came up. He was better, but looked worn and ill. A flush of surprise came into his face when he saw who we had with us, and he shook hands with the ladies nearly in silence.

"Oxford has not mended your looks, Mr. Todhetley," said Miss Deveen.

"I have one of my bad headaches to-day," he answered. "I get them now and then."

The group of us were turning to walk on, when in that moment there approached Sophie Chalk. Sophie in a glistening blue silk, and flowers, and jingling ornaments, and kid gloves. She was coming up to us as bold as brass with her fascinating smile, when she saw Miss Deveen, and stopped short. Miss Deveen passed on without notice of any kind; Helen really did not see her; Anna, always gentle and kind, slightly bowed. Even then Madam Sophie's native impudence came to her aid. She saw they meant to shun her, and she nodded and smiled at Tod, and made as though she would stop him for a chat. He took off his cap to her, and went on. Anna's delicate face had flushed, and his own was white enough for its coffin.

Miss Deveen held Tod's hand in parting. "I am so glad to have met you again," she cordially said; "we are all glad. We shall see you often, I hope, until we go up together. And all you young people are coming to me for a few days in the Easter holidays. Friends cannot afford too long absences from one another in this short life. Good-bye; and mind you get rid of your headache for to-morrow. There; shake hands with Helen and Anna."

He did as he was bid. Helen was gay as usual; Anna rather shy. Her pretty blue eyes glanced up at Tod's, and he smiled for the first time that day. Sophie Chalk might have fascinated three parts of his heart away, but there was a corner in it remaining for Anna Whitney.

I did not do it intentionally. Going into our room the next day, a sheet of paper with some writing on it lay on the table, the ink still wet. Supposing it was some message just left for me by Tod, I went up to read it, and caught the full sense of the lines.

"Dear Mrs. Everty,—I have just received your note. I am sorry that I cannot drive you out to-day—and fear that I shall not be able to do so at all. Our friends, who are staying here, have to receive the best part of my leisure time. Faithfully yours, J. TODHETLEY."

And I knew by the contents of the note, by its very wording even, that the crisis was past, and Tod saved.

"Thank you, Johnny! 'Perhaps you'll read your own letters another time. That's mine."

He had come out of his room with the envelopes and sealing-wax.

"I beg your pardon, Tod. I thought it was a message you had left for me, seeing it lie open."

"You've read it, I suppose?"

"Yes, or just as good. My eyes seemed to take it all in at once; and I am as glad as though I had a purse of fairy gold."

"Well, it's no use trying to fight against a stream," said he, as he folded the note. "And if I had known the truth about the emeralds, why—there'd have been no bother at all."

"Putting the emeralds out of the question, she is not a nice person to know, Tod. And there's no telling what might have come of it."

"I suppose not. When the two paths, down-hill and up-hill, cross each other, as Brandon put it, and the one is pleasant and the other is not, one has to do a bit of battle with oneself in choosing the right."

And something in his face told me that in the intervening day and nights, he had battled with himself as few can battle; fought strenuously with the evil, striven hard for the good, and come out a conqueror.

"It has cost you pain."

"Somewhat, Johnny. There are few good things in the way of duty, but what do cost man pain—as it seems to me. The world and a safe conscience will give us back our recompense."

"And Heaven too, Tod."

"Ay, lad; and Heaven."

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

FROM SALZBURG TO GASTEIN.

HERE is no railway between Salzburg and Gastein. The only mode of communication is by diligence, or by hiring a private carriage which opens and closes at pleasure of the traveller.

This diligence was a lumbering machine after the fashion of its kind ;



SALZBURG.

but the horses were decent, and moved at a tolerably quick pace. Yet it was impossible thus to journey without losing a great part of the surrounding scenery ; an idea not to be entertained for a moment, except by those who like the guard and coachman have traversed the route so frequently, that familiarity has robbed it of its charm.

For one person, where economy is an object, the diligence is the quickest and best means of reaching Gastein. A carriage cannot do it under two days, without relays of post horses ; and even then the fatigue is considerable. But if two or more are travelling, it is almost as inexpensive to hire a carriage. The latter holds four ; so that an amicable parti-carré may travel for the price of one. In many parts of

the Tyrol, where there is no railroad, this is a consideration not to be lost sight of. Another consideration is, the importance of travelling with the smallest possible amount of luggage. This the Germans never forget. Sometimes I have charitably concluded that they must have brought with them at least a change of linen ; but from the extent of their baggage it would have puzzled a conjuror to discover where it was stowed away. The English more frequently find their unwieldy trunks (not small in number by way of balance) have cost them in the end far more than they cost themselves : and certainly infinitely more trouble and anxiety.

Herr Jung, the landlord of the Hotel de l'Europe, strongly advocated a carriage in preference to the diligence. Indeed, he went beyond the boundary of mere counsel, and agreeably settled the matter by saying that it was the only course to be adopted, and that he would make it his business to select an easy conveyance and a good coachman. We were loath to leave a place so beautiful, and could scarcely have done so, but that it was in our plan to return to it again. It would be impossible to speak too highly of the hotel, of its comfort and good management ; and of its unrivalled site.

Afternoon had set in when we started for Gastein, in an open carriage, at the quiet pace of a pair of horses. Golling, that evening's destination, ought to be reached about seven o'clock : and I was anxious to get there before nightfall, for the purpose of visiting a famous waterfall in the neighbourhood.

In time we reached the village of Hallein, at the foot of the Dürrenberg, noted for its salt mines. I had entered a salt mine at Berchtesgaden, and felt no desire to repeat the experiment. In most respects it was disappointing, fulfilling none of those visions of lofty caverns, and stately pillars, and grand arches, blazing and flashing like diamonds, that somehow float in the mind in connection with the subject. Explored also by many ladies, none surely would be bold enough to venture did they but know what lay before them. Sliding down a very long, steep incline of wood, astride on the back of a miner, at a breathless rate, is one of the inevitable and not very feminine feats to be performed during the inspection.

Without halting at Hallein, we drove on through scenery growing each moment more wild and grand. Crossing the Salza and ascending the right bank, the valley narrowed ; and soon was perceived rising, the wild mass of the Tännengebirge, a long uninterrupted chain of mountain. The next village was Kuckl ; and between six and seven o'clock Golling was entered, and that day's journey came to an end.

The quaintest village ever seen : consisting of one long, winding street ; a crude, unworldly aspect about the houses, which all resembled each other, and gave to the place a primitive appearance that reminded you of nothing so much as a Quaker-settlement. Every house was

whitewashed, and looked almost dazzlingly clean. Each roof was pointed and overhanging ; large stones placed here and there as a protection against the fall of winter snows. The effect of this uniformity was pleasing to a stranger because the architecture—to apply a ridiculously grand word to the most humble of buildings—was so marked and uncommon : but the stiffness of the whole was a prominent feature. At the entrance of the village was a toll-bar : a long pole with a heap of stones at one end that balanced the pole upwards when the rope holding it was unfastened. By this means, at night, the keeper is enabled, without getting up, in answer to the horn carried by most of the post boys, to slacken the rope and raise the bar.



GOLLING.

Not less primitive than the village was the inn ; and if the rooms were not luxuriously furnished, they were large and clean. But it was not so primitive in all respects : the landlord knew how to charge. Taking all things into consideration and comparison, it was on the whole the dearest place we stayed at in Germany : dearer than the best hotels in Munich (which are not dear) ; certainly more advanced than the Hotel de l'Europe. Vexed, and a little indignant at the bill, I determined that Golling should not be the halting place on the return journey. But our best laid plans, like many of our good intentions, often come to nought ; and on that subsequent journey, it so happened

that, spite of foregone resolutions, it was found impracticable to stop anywhere else.

The village is surrounded by mountains that from their peculiar form look higher than they are in reality : on one side sufficiently distant to admit of a rich and fertile plain. Whilst tea was brewing at the inn, I strolled out into the village for a moment, and into the church, which had no beauty to recommend it ; and on the exterior, several representations in relief from the New Testament, let into the wall, rather revolting for their ugliness. The graveyard was in perfect order, many of the simple stones bearing inscriptions from the Book of Wisdom. One text seemed especially a favourite :

“But the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die : and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction : but they are in peace.”

Somehow, to find the well known text in this primitive, out-of-the-world spot, so far from home, from all familiar objects ; brought to the mind more forcibly than anything else could have done, the fact that distant as nations are separated from each other ; opposite as they may be in habits, manners, customs, thoughts ; still they possess the one great link that binds them together : the same faith, the same hope ; even as they must all pass through the one same dark portal of death. Alike in the great, eternal creed.

Over all there was an air of quiet and repose ; an atmosphere of sanctity that made itself felt if it could not be seen ; proclaiming with what reverence these people regard their religion.

Tea quickly despatched, we started off for the waterfall, a young blacksmith's boy acting as guide.

He was a lad of about sixteen, but looked at least two or three years younger. His expression at a first glance seemed stupid, bordering on deficiency ; but as we went on and he began to talk, his face lighted up with intelligence.

“Have you a father or mother?” I asked.

“No,” was the reply : “both dead.”

“Any brothers and sisters?”

“Two sisters and one brother. All out at work and doing for themselves.”

“Are they older than you?”

Yes. He was the youngest of all.

“What work do you do?”

The question was unneeded for the boy's complexion sufficiently betrayed his occupation ; but it followed naturally.

“Schmidt,” said he, with such a short, crisp, abrupt sound, that it was impossible to restrain an equally short, crisp laugh.

“What made you choose so dirty a trade?”

"I like it," he replied. "It is warm in winter. One of my sisters works in the fields: that would not suit me. The other is a servant."

"Do you earn wages?"

"Not yet, Herr. Next year I shall begin."

"How do you manage about clothes?"

"I sometimes have them given to me. Sometimes a little money, too. My sisters help me as far as they can; they can't do much."

"Do you like apples?" I asked, after we had walked a little way in silence.

"Oh ja!" And this time the gleam of intelligence was unmistakable.

I had taken one from the tea-table as a curiosity, the biggest and ruddiest of its kind ever seen. Here was a good opportunity of disposing of it. The boy turned it critically round with both hands, smelt it, and finally crammed it into his pocket with a smile of satisfaction.

"I like apples," said he; "and this is a beauty."

"Why don't you eat it?"

He shook his head. "By and by. Not now. We are coming to the waterfall."

We had reached the foot of the mountain, and could hear the water dashing over the stony rocks. A short, steep ascent, and we came to it. Dusk was growing apace, and much of the beauty of the scene was fast disappearing with daylight. But on the other hand there was that mysterious atmosphere of holiness and repose over nature that always accompanies the twilight. We clambered up to a small wooden bridge thrown across the chasm, whence could be obtained the best view of the dashing fall, both above and below. The spray flew over in a shower, but who cared when so spell-bound? It was a sight not to be lost, though the volume of water was less great than rumour had led one to anticipate. Its situation was completely romantic. The solitude at this darkening hour seemed excessive, striking the senses with awe. No sound save the roaring of the waters, no sign of human habitation but the mill below; of which the stream in its course worked the wheel.

Not until darkness had quite crept over all did we turn back. As we descended the path towards a picturesque hut built of rough logs of wood, the mill door opened, and a woman with a lighted candle issued forth. We all reached the hut together, and then observed that it contained photographs, stones, bits of wood, and other curiosities for sale. Even here, at this hour of the night, when one might have thought to escape under cover of the darkness, the inevitable bargain had to be made. So after due examination of the relics, we were set free of the toils with a view of the waterfall and a fossil stone. The candle was extinguished, and the solitary but civil and pleasant woman walked back to her mill. As the door closed behind her with a click,

I wondered whether she had any one to keep her company in that dull desert-like habitation.

It was getting late when we reached the inn. Over and above rewarding the lad for his trouble, we gave him a brand new piece of silver money, with strict injunctions never to change it, but to keep it in memory of the evening. He faithfully promised, though his anxious inquiry as to its value was not to be received without suspicion. One would almost dread now to inquire how long it remained unbroken. Finally we parted : he probably to cultivate more tender relations with his apple ; we to our rooms and the luxury of unconsciousness.

But if for a moment I had indulged in the vain hope of a good night's rest, I was destined to be terribly undeceived. Whether the Gollingers are inclined to deafness ; or whether their hard, daily work blesses them at night with sleep so sound that nothing will awaken them ; cannot be told. Never, certes, was sleepless night passed in a more complete wilderness of noise.

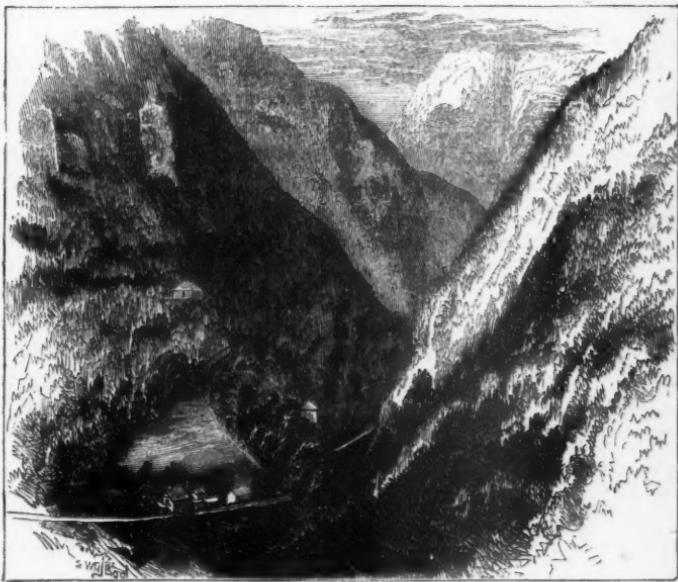
To begin with, once an hour a watchman patrolled the village, singing a verse of a hymn in one of the most unearthly voices ever heard. This seemed to irritate a company of dogs to so great an extent that they kept up an incessant barking and howling : and no one could wonder at their vigorous protest. One noise after another kept on in rapid succession until two o'clock. Then the diligence from Gastein came rattling over the stones of the street with a noise like thunder. The coachman cracked his whip as only the Tyrolean know how to do it, and the horrible machine with its two pair of cattle, dashed up to a standstill at the very door of the inn. A loud bell pealed through the empty spaces of the straggling building, and in a short time, which yet seemed an age, doors were unbarred and swung back, and there followed a clatter as of the changing horses. The conductor and a passenger jumped out of the interior ; and in about twenty minutes the whole concern crashed off again towards Gastein. The coachman had evidently treated his whip to beer as well as himself, for the cracks echoed amongst the hills like a volley of rifles ; the horses shook their heads and switched their tails : and like a faint roar of contending elements the sounds died away in the distance.

Soon after, as if to mock the hope of sleep that had begun to settle on heavy eyelids, the watchman reappeared upon the scene with his perpetual hymn tune and hideous tones. Then, ere long, darkness seemed to lift itself, and creep away from the room ; gradually one object after another grew visible ; the stars paled and flickered and went out ; the sky opened ; and daybreak was proclaimed with an insane chorus of cock-crowing. The dogs, now hoarse and weary, composed themselves to sleep ; the watchman went in ; but it was time for the world to turn out. The baker's house opposite was the first to uprise. The shutters swung back, and a rush of vapour and a whole-

some smell of fresh-made bread were wafted upon the air. At five o'clock the church bell rang out a loud peal, and the village had entered upon a new day.

There was no time to be lost in idleness, although I was far less refreshed than when I had gone to bed the previous night. Breakfast was soon over; a basin of strong hot coffee brought new life with it; the bill was settled with many an inward protest: and at half-past six we were once more on the road to Gastein.

The morning at first was cold enough for any amount of rugs and shawls and great coats: but a few hours later, when the sun had



PASS LUEG.

climbed higher into the sky it grew as intensely, insufferably hot. Now, however, the mountains kept the sun away, and a pass was soon entered up which the wind rushed with a shiver in its wake. Almost immediately after leaving Golling, a steep ascent of five miles was commenced through the wild and magnificent Pass Lueg, necessitating an extra horse to the summit of the hill. The mountains closed in on both sides, a narrow valley between, through which rushed the Salza: closed in so nearly in many parts as scarcely to leave room for road and river. Sometimes they appeared as if about to close altogether and bar further progress; when the turn of an unsuspected angle would open up a fresh scene of beauty and grandeur, with a sudden-

ness, a mere twinkling of the eye, that seemed to border on the supernatural. The mountains were richly wooded with sombre, unbending pines, and occasionally far up the height, a small white fortress peeped out mysteriously amidst the dark foliage, perched on some jutting rock, to all appearance inaccessible.

After a long drive of this description, in which grandeur was literally heaped upon grandeur, we reached the village of Werfen, and halted an hour for the sake of the beasts, that in this instance were indeed of burden. The valley had expanded, and the mountains now looked a gigantic, overpowering mass, displaying themselves in wildest form and greatest height; surrounding us on every side. In comparison the houses looked a small, white cluster of sheds, that might easily be crushed and hidden for ever by a mere rolling fragment of rock.

It was yet early and the whole village was at church where service was being held. Night and morning, summer and winter, as many as are able assemble for a short prayer. The organ was playing as we entered the churchyard, but its swell soon died away on the air and the priest took up his part. In a few minutes the people flocked out and dispersed, each his own way to his own work.

High up on the left hand, on the summit of a rock separating the mountains, seeming by comparison a dwarf between giants, stood the castle, where, years ago, the protestants were persecuted. At its foot the river rushes past, where the poor bodies were thrown after torture and death. Pitched from the rock down the steep, perpendicular precipice. The rock is wooded with pine trees, through which the wind on a calm night goes sighing with a weird, sobbing sound, as if the unhappy spirits were still hovering amongst them, unable to rest in peace until their martyrdom had been avenged.

Some of the mountains, too, are wooded, and abound in wild strawberries: others are barren, rugged and rock-like, their tops covered with a white dazzling snow that makes them look larger than they really are, and in winter must give them a cold, inhospitable aspect. But at this time of the year, when everyone was almost prostrate with the heat, it was refreshing to turn one's eyes upwards. Yet after all, like the fox and the grapes, you ceased to envy the mountain tops, seeking consolation in the thought that probably the cold up there was not less trying to the nerves than the heat below.

Altogether, I liked the place, and the people of the inn, and determined to stay here the night on the return journey, in preference to Golling. But, as has been already remarked, the wish was frustrated. For all that we shall meet with it again.

Man and beast rested and refreshed, the cavalcade once more set off on its travels. The sun was now well up in the sky, and rugs and coats had to be put out of sight. The amount of dust was an unfathomable mystery. It seemed as if the sandy desert had transferred

its quarters bodily ; every now and then a gust of wind would carry up a cloud that shut out everything, and left you in chaos. Long before Gastein was thought of, the cavalcade was so disguised by it as to be past recognition even by its best friends.

Quitting Werfen, the valley continued to widen a little, and the road separated : one leading into Styria and Carinthia, the other, in due time, to the village of Bischofshoven. Here the Tännengebirge were left behind, and we passed into new, though not less wild and remarkable scenery. The continuous and somewhat monotonous chain of mountain was broken. The Salza was again crossed, and following the right bank of the river, a steep rugged ascent led to St. Johann.

Beyond this, the road swept round, and passed through the valley by the river side. The mountains here seemed to have taken form according to their own fancy, and some of them looked green and fertile. Wild flowers, beautiful and abundant, grew by the road side, interspersed with strawberry roots laden with unripe fruit. Here and there a little way up the slopes were clusters of the Alpine rose, not yet in full bloom. The rapid river bounded over its hard, shallow bed with an unceasing sound, the music of the mountains ; whilst at intervals a dull thud smote upon the ear, as a log of wood, floating down to its destination, came into contact with a huge stone jutting its head above the water.

Thus journeying, until the small village of Schwarzach was reached. Like many other of the best things that keep themselves retired and unknown, this village, perhaps of all, deserves the most mention, honour, and glory. It was here that in 1729 the leaders of the Protestant peasants met and bound themselves by a solemn oath that come life or death, victory or persecution, they would never renounce their faith. In the end, some endured martyrdom ; others, an immense body, had to fly for refuge, exiles, into foreign lands.

The Salza was again crossed, and Lend in due time reached ; immediately after which you enter the pass leading to the valley of Gastein. The horses again rested, for the most difficult part of the journey was about to commence. It is rumoured that ere very long a railway may be constructed from Salzburg to Lend, thus materially shortening the distance to Gastein. But beyond this point it may safely be asserted that all the power and ingenuity of man will be unable to extend it.

We now turned southward, and with the help of four horses commenced ascending the* Pass Klamm, the terrific nature of which it would be impossible to give an idea. The mountains on either side are steep and precipitous, in parts perpendicular, and at times almost closing in. Ascending higher and higher the channel grows deeper and deeper still, until at last you look far down into the yawning depths with an involuntary shudder. The rugged road is cut out of the side of the precipice ; in places so narrow that if two carriages happen to meet, one or the

other has to draw into a hollow of the rock, blasted out for the purpose. Occasionally you pass under a deep overhanging piece of rock that seems threatening to fall and crush the luckless wayfarer. The sense of the dangerous and terrible is in many places heightened by cracks and fissures, so that portions of stone, big as houses, seem suspended as it were by a mere thread, on the point of snapping. That many enormous pieces have fallen from time to time is testified by the fragments that lie at the bottom of the precipice, and by the eternal ruts that mark their path to their final resting place. So grand and fearful was it that it is no figure of speech to say that breath was taken away; not from fear—in moments of danger or excitement fear finds no place—but from the nature of the scene. At one point was an ancient gateway and castle, the Klammstein, commanding the pass, built as far back as the eleventh century, and still in perfect preservation.

The ascent achieved, the valley of Gastein opened to view.

There are three villages of Gastein at some distance from each other. Dorf-Gastein, Hof-Gastein, and lastly Wildbad-Gastein, sometimes shortened to Bad-Gastein; more commonly called simply Gastein: the Gastein par excellence. Beyond this there is still Böckstein, a corruption of Böck-Gastein; a small village now utterly insignificant. Here comes what may fairly be called the end of the world, for vehicles of every description having got so far must confess themselves beaten, and for many miles retrace their steps.

First, Dorf-Gastein, whence at the far end of the valley the snow mountains towered into sight. But the valley here is so wide; looking all the wider in contrast with the narrow pass just scaled; that you forget the fact of its being a valley. On either hand the mountains are green and fertile, sloping away and resembling a little those gardens on the banks of the Rhine.

Beyond Hof-Gastein began the final ascent leading to Gastein, which from a distance looked a small cluster of houses embedded in the mountains: great mountains that closed in at the head of the valley in every direction but that from which we were travelling. Heart sank and pulse went down as I wondered whence came the wonderful, much-vaunted, fresh, life-giving breezes.

"That is not Gastein," I asserted to the coachman, on the verge of despair, as if putting the question in the form of a denial would influence the answer.

"Ya! ya! Gastein," responded he, quite as emphatically, and with a sigh of relief.

"But I thought Gastein was at the top of a high mountain?"

"I don't think we have had much down-hill work," retorted the man comically.

"True. But there are mountains still higher."

"And high enough they are," he answered in the same tone. "I

shouldn't care to drive to the top of one of them. Neither would you, mein Herr."

"All they who pass these portals leave hope behind." In some such frame of mind, and in silence, the ascent was accomplished right into Gastein itself. Past a church in course of erection ; past a house or two, perched up on the right ; past a long, low room that seemed built of nothing but glass ; and into the yard of Straubinger's Hotel, recommended as the best Gastein afforded.

Without regret or sorrow I found myself at length in a place of rest ; peace and quiet in perspective. We had not written to secure rooms, and thanks to the early time of year were fortunate enough to find good ones unoccupied. The head waiter led the way down a narrow passage into a good sized room opening into a smaller one, walls and ceiling panelled with polished maple-wood, cool and delightful in appearance ; the only rooms in the hotel, two others excepted, so fitted up.

Repose at length. I sat down for a few moments pondering, and looked about. Sensation number one was a shock; not an electric shock, or the shock of having seen a ghost ; but what just then was far worse than either. It threw a damper upon my hopes of Gastein, health, air, and all blessings to follow in their train. Expectations had been terribly exalted. I had thought to find Gastein, as already remarked, on the summit of a high mountain, embracing all the pure air of heaven : and in place beheld a village completely embedded in the earth. Impossible to conceive a spot more so. In England it had been said that we should find it cold : so cold that the idea of going so early in the year was in itself absurd. Such was the place in perspective ; such the climate. In reality it was hot with an intense and glowing heat seldom felt elsewhere. In vain to throw wide the windows; not a breath of air rustles the leaves ; not a sound came from the pines on the far-off mountain tops. Other sounds there were, but too loud and near to be agreeable: proceeding from an enormous waterfall that washed the very side of the inn, and with a voice of mighty thunder went dashing down a steep precipice far into the valley. Beautiful it was indeed ; but in sound awful.

Unless the reader has dwelt some considerable time beneath the shadow of a waterfall : so near that by stretching out a hand he may catch the spray ; and that a fall not such as may occasionally be seen on the stage or met with in artificial pleasure-grounds, but one of the largest masses of downpouring water in Europe : unless has been experienced the sensation of a never-ending sound, from which there can be no escape ; day and night seeming to bid defiance by its ceaseless roar : if this has not been experienced by the reader, it would not be possible to sympathise with me in those first hours. Until then I, too, had never dwelt under the shadow of a torrent, great or small :

never in hearing of any continuous sound save of the restless ocean, which is altogether a thing apart. The one will soothe you to slumber ; the other may lash you into—a fine frenzy, certainly—that of madness.

My ponderings came speedily to the following conclusion, divided—like an old-fashioned parson's sermon—into three heads and an application : Unmanly to sit down and shed tears : wicked to swear : impossible to go straight back at once, blow up friends and doctors, and send them all to the — to Hanover. There remained only to endure.

Yet was it not a thought worthy of despondency to have come so far for so little purpose ? Snow ? yes, certainly, on the tops of the mountains ; in the hollow the heat of the tropics twice told.

The next day, Sunday, I sallied forth to reconnoitre what I now looked upon in the light of nothing less than a fiend disguised as a friend. Down the vale in search of air, where none was. Alone, in a kind of rabid despair, I gave vent to pent-up feelings, and like a maniac shouted for air. A dozen echoes from the surrounding mountains seemed to bring back the mocking answer, Where ? At least to an overwrought imagination it sounded very much like it. Up higher into the mountains, and so nearer the sun, but the exertion gained no other reward. On to the Bridge of Terror, where you might look up and down at the overpowering rush of water. A glorious sight ; to be admitted with all one's powers ; but in that existing frame of mind yielding neither pleasure nor consolation. Then back to the hotel in time for the one o'clock table d'hôte ; and, all things considered, with some appetite for the banquet.

Monday rose red-hot and bright as the preceding day. The torrent, with its unceasing roar, was still there. Instead of feeling better for the rest from travel, I seemed to have gone back many degrees since Saturday ; and was beginning to debate most seriously upon the expediency of packing up and returning home, when a thought flashed like an inspiration upon the dulled senses, that it might be as well first to call upon some doctor and ask him in what lay the wonderful virtue of the place.

About ten o'clock I strolled out, and turning to the left soon came upon a small stone building consisting of two rooms. On the door, in large black letters, was written DAMPFBAD ; on the lintel the name of a doctor, and *Nachtglöcke*. The door stood invitingly open : an omen to the superstitiously inclined. I rang boldly.

WHAT OUR ADVERTISEMENT BROUGHT.

DEBORAH had an idea. She repeated that fact several times most provokingly before she would tell me what the idea was. We had just been going over our account-books for the twentieth time that week ; and had seen, more clearly than ever, that we must begin in earnest now to live on half as much as we had allowed ourselves during the life of our stepmother, whose jointure died with her.

Well, the question was, and had been ever since the funeral, how were we to manage this ? We had sold the pony-carriage and dismissed our manservant, but, even without those luxuries, we could not keep on the old country house in which so many rooms were unnecessary to us. Our old lawyer said, " Let the house just as it is. I will find you a good tenant who will not spoil the furniture, and the rent will make your income sufficient." Deborah grew hysterical at the idea, and I had some difficulty in bringing her round. Other friends gave other advice. " Sell all the house contains ; you will be sure to have a good sale. Add the proceeds to your capital, and you can live very comfortably on the interest ; especially in such a place as—Dieppe, for instance."

The thought of this banishment from England was hard enough ; but that other thought ! Sell the furniture which we had cherished for —well, never mind exactly how many years, for Deborah and I were not quite so young as we had been : the furniture whose polishing we had always ourselves personally superintended ; and which we ourselves veiled in holland every night. Sell the plate which was our great and natural source of pride ; the plate we counted every night with unction before we entertained the thought of sleep ; the plate which was the envy of our neighbours at every party we gave. Sell the furniture and plate ! The proposal was a stab in our most tender part.

We had talked over our affairs a great deal ; it was very cold weather, and sitting over the fire discussing a subject of such importance was not disagreeable, but we had arrived at no definite conclusion when Deborah so abruptly told me that she had an idea. When she was at last prevailed upon to explain, this was what it was : " Suppose we take a house in London large enough to do credit to the chief and best of our furniture, and receive a gentleman to board with us, giving him up one or two rooms. What he would pay us would make the rent as easy for us as if we took a pottering little house, which I'm sure would kill me. This would be an advantage in many ways, don't you see ? We should have somebody in the house who would appreciate the plate and the comfort of our home, and we need not part with the things we are fond of. There, Lavinia, that's my idea ; what do you think of it ? "

Afraid of committing myself if I answered rashly, I took a long time to deliberate. But I came to think with Deborah, because I could not propose anything else on my own account ; and it all came be settled so.

Two months after that, we were beginning to feel settled in our house in — but I think, for several reasons, I had better not say in what favourite suburb of London ; and the greater number of our favourite goods and chattels were about us. The house was certainly one of a terrace, and we were too country-bred to relish that, but still (as Deborah said) it was all the safer.

Gradually we grew to know our neighbours a little—by sight I mean, the windows being as pleasant parts of the room as any other to sit in. But one we knew personally, having chanced to make his acquaintance during our troublesome removal. He is a bachelor, living next door to us, and, for all profession, he is “on” one of the daily papers. I’m sure I don’t know exactly what it means, or why he should be there when he looks clever enough to be an author or a poet. But he says he is “on it,” and seems satisfied ; and so, as Deborah says, “it is unnecessary for us to regret it.” I should have fancied it would not be very profitable for a gentleman to be on a paper that you can buy anywhere for a penny, but I don’t know what to say when I see his house, for it is most handsomely furnished, and there is only himself and his housekeeper to occupy it. The first floor of each house in this terrace contains a drawing-room to the front and bed-room to the back. Mr. Hall sits to write in the drawing-room, and sleeps in the room behind. In our house those are the two rooms we want to let ; and, though I say it that should not—also Deborah who should not either,—two more comfortable rooms could nowhere be found. “You should not say so, Lavinia,” Deborah used to plead ; “still if any one had a right to look for a permanent and grateful tenant, I think it would be ourselves.”

The next thing, of course, was to get this permanent and grateful tenant ; and we began to draw up our advertisement ; for Mr. Hall (that is our next door neighbour on the left—the house next to ours on the right is unfortunately vacant) had told us emphatically that an advertisement was our best agent. We drew it up between us. Don’t imagine that I mean we drew it up that night. No ; ours was not an advertisement to be hastily compressed within the limits of one evening. That was Saturday, and by the next Thursday it was ready for us to leave at the office of the paper ; for we knew the post was no vehicle for such a document as this.

“Eleven shillings,” said the clerk, counting the words as indifferently as if they had been common-place ones.

“Eleven shillings !” echoed Deborah, ruefully. “Is that not rather high ?”

"It's a long advertisement," he said, looking as if he carelessly weighed it with his eye.

"You counted very rapidly," commented Deborah, politely. "Do you feel as if you had been quite correct?"

I do not wish to say the young man was not civil, but I was conscious that his expression too nearly bordered on a laugh. Besides, though he appeared to count again, he held to the eleven shillings; and Deborah had to pay it too.

"Of course, as the charge is so high, the advertisement will be inserted at once," spoke Deborah, with confidence. I was sorry once more to remark in the young man an inclination to smile, because otherwise he was well behaved. And, indeed, it is due to him here to state that he evidently *did* exert himself on our behalf, for next day our advertisement was in.

To us the paper seemed to contain nothing else, though I remember that many people said about that time that the daily papers were filled with the Claimant.

"It reads beautifully," remarked Deborah. "That one idea of mine, about full liberty with the comfort of home, tells excellently; not that I wish to take the credit, Lavinia; we will look upon the whole composition as a joint production."

Which view I took also.

"That idea of inviting a call is good too," continued Deborah. "You remember my saying *that* would take, when I first proposed it. Now make haste over your breakfast, Lavinia. Some one may call directly. Each one would try to be first. I will go at once and change my dress."

And Deborah rose, to my intense surprise, without waiting for her second cup of tea. "Don't be excited," she said, putting an antimacassar into her pocket and dropping her handkerchief; "I am always calm over these things. Dear me, Lavinia, how mean the other advertisements look beside ours."

We could not have a pudding *that* day, so I was soon ready to join Deborah, and prepared to entertain our callers as they might flock to us. We had put on our tabby silks and garnet ear-rings, and I think we looked very nice indeed, and not nearly so anxious and frightened as we really felt. Mary Ann, too, was dressed, and sewing in her tidy kitchen; for though I didn't myself fancy that any gentleman would ask to see the kitchen, Deborah said one never could foresee what London people might do.

Well, though that was one of the longest days I ever spent, I need not make it so long in the telling. At dark, when Ann came in to close the shutters, Deborah and I were still sitting in our tabby silks, working at the Berlin work, which we always kept to take out to tea with us, and trying to look as if we always wore shot silks and garnets, and had

not put them on for any special purpose in creation. But when Ann asked whether "The gentlemen we were expecting would be here to tea, and how many cups she should bring in," I really thought Deborah would have an attack of some kind.

I was very glad to see the tea come in; it did us both good. I was inclined by that time to give up all hope, and the feeling (though laden with despair) brought with it a certain sense of relief. I put my chair exactly in front of the fire, turned up my dress, and put my feet on the fender: not so much because they were cold as because the attitude was such a thorough change. But Deborah was more thoughtful. "Gentlemen engaged in their offices all day," she said, "will only be able to call in the evenings."

We cheered up again at that idea. The house looked so warm and bright and snug that we congratulated each other on the gentlemen not having called until now. Slowly the evening went on, leaving us undisturbed.

"I wish Mr. Hall would drop in," sighed I; "this is such a waste of our best silks."

"And of the fires all over the house," added Deborah.

An hour's pause, during which I managed to snatch forty refreshing winks.

"Eleven shillings was an exorbitant price for that advertisement," ruminated Deborah, presently.

We went to bed an hour earlier than usual, feeling as if the day had been a week long, but next morning we rose almost as hopefully as we had done the day before. I could not let cook make the lemon pudding—it is one of the things she never *will* learn to do properly, and in which I am very particular, and, perhaps I may add, successful. So Deborah was stationed alone for some time in the drawing-room, sighing that her best dress would soon not be worth picking up.

And just think of it! I had only that minute finished the pudding, when the knock came. I stood in the kitchen, my heart fluttering as I heard a manly voice and step in the dining-room. In less than ten minutes I was entering it myself, with as affable a smile as I could assume on so short a notice, and in my tabby silk and garnet ear-rings too.

There he was; an elderly gentleman with a smiling face. It struck me pleasantly upon the instant that he was just one to enjoy a lemon pudding—if well made. He rose with gallantry and bowed to me. I offered to take his hat and stick, which he was nursing, but he would not hear of troubling me. So I smiled again and sat down.

"I have called in consequence of your advertisement," he explained to me politely. "It was a very attractive advertisement, and a young friend of mine, who is seeking apartments, requested me to come for him, as he is particularly engaged this morning."

I had no idea what it would be becoming in me to say, so I bowed;

thinking what a very low charge eleven shillings was for that advertisement.

"This young friend has been living with me for some time," continued the elderly gentleman, "and I am anxious that in another home he should not miss any of the luxuries—I hope I may say luxuries—to which he has been accustomed. I wish him to meet with a home superior to those generally offered to young men by advertisements. Yours appeared to me to be just such a one." Here he smiled at me. I suppose he had said the same and smiled the same at Deborah before. "Now, may I ask," he continued, pleasantly, "if you make an extra—a—matter of the—say the linen and plate?"

Here was a glorious opening for Deborah. She told the elderly gentleman a chapter or two of our family history, and the reason of our taking this house, dotting the information with hints of the great value of our plate and linen; indeed, she almost went so far as to supply him with an inventory of them. And the elderly gentleman looked a little bit bored as he listened.

"I should like to show you the plate," concluded Deborah, waxing more and more chatty.

At first he seemed to think it would be troubling her very unnecessarily; but, perhaps, he fancied she would be hurt by his refusal, for he came round laughingly to express a wish to see our treasures. Deborah took him to the plate closet, while I hovered in the background, looking on and listening, while he admired everything to our hearts' content. After this we went upstairs, in a procession of three, to inspect the drawing-room. The elderly gentleman, still caressing his hat and stick, said there was no doubt about *that* being a pleasant and handsome room; and, of course, we entirely agreed with him.

"And this is the bedroom, is it?" he questioned, airily, as he moved into the back room.

His question drew Deborah in after him, but I lingered at the door. This was not a drawing-room, you see.

"Nice room," he said, heartily, as he sauntered up to the window.

I began to tremble when he reached it, for the view from this back window was not attractive. Just below ran the roof of the sculleries; beyond that a long strip of garden, ending in a wooden paling, and then the backs of other houses; and on the left a wide, bleak brick-field.

"A very fair, open look-out," remarked the elderly gentleman; and the beating of my heart grew regular again. "I am sure my young friend would be hard to please if he were not satisfied with this," he continued, smiling graciously. "Let me consider: Is there any other question I ought to ask? Have you any—any other gentleman residing with you?"

Deborah rather haughtily refuted the idea. "There is no one in the

house at all," she concluded, "but my sister, and myself, and the domestics, of course."

"The domestics, of course," he repeated, pleasantly; "and very comfortable must such an arrangement be. I can only hope my young friend will not unpleasantly intrude on your genteel and refined privacy. And now," he added, giving a last look round the room, "I have only to thank you for your kindly proffered information. I am sure my young friend will decide to take up his residence with you, and will doubtless wish to come at once. One thing—pardon my mentioning it, ladies,—the venetian blinds, being new, have a—have still a slight odour clinging to them: and the odour of paint is *not* too agreeable. Might I suggest that the window should be opened a little—allow me—a very little is enough. There, half an inch—quite sufficient. I trust you pardon the liberty of the suggestion."

We thought it a kind suggestion, and it was natural for us to tell him so. Deborah and I did so in concert, as we tripped downstairs before him.

Midway the elderly gentleman paused and looked back. "I see," he said, with a wave of his hand, "that my young friend will sleep alone on this story."

"Would that be a drawback?" inquired Deborah, with a sudden access of anxiety. "Was his young friend nervous?"

"Nervous; yes, a little," the elderly gentleman allowed, regretfully, "but only on the subject of fire."

Deborah and I both hastened to explain how we always saw the fires put safely out before we went to bed. Then the elderly gentleman's mind appeared quite set at rest on behalf of his young friend. There seemed nothing more to say, so he brushed his hat with his hand, bade us good-bye, put on his hat, went out upon the steps, and took it off again with a polite backward glance and bow. Presently, through the dining-room window, we saw him hail a hansom and drive off. I felt in a most exuberant state of delight, but contented myself by remarking stolidly that it had all turned out very well.

"Well!" echoed Deborah, ringing the bell twice as she spoke. "Didn't I tell you what that advertisement would bring? How cleverly we managed it. Now we must explain it all to Ann. She must be prepared and instructed. Put out the sheets, Lavinia; and how about the towels? and as for that new dozen of frilled pillow-covers—what a good thing I'm not excitable, else I should be in a pretty state now. How slow Ann is, and I want a hundred things done. Don't interrupt me when I am giving my orders, Lavinia; do be calm."

Our preparations were not entirely over until night, though (looking back now) I cannot remember any important thing we did except airing linen. I had determined to sleep on the spare bed, to keep it

well aired, for fear the elderly gentleman's young friend might be susceptible of cold. Only as I went up to my own room to prepare for bed did I close the window of the spare room : the new blinds should have the benefit of the air till the last moment. But I did not trouble myself to fasten the window, because I should have had to mount upon, or move the dressing-table.

Deborah laughed at the notion of the three only inmates of the house occupying a floor each, but I was firm, and passed on in my dressing-gown to my new room. I have two strong prejudices; one against locking myself into my bedroom ; the other against sleeping in a lighted room ; so, without turning the key or lighting the gas at all, I slipped into bed, drew the eider-down quilt up to my very nose, and went off to sleep at once—as anyone should do with an easy conscience and a good couch.

In the very dead of the night I was awakened by as slight a sound as ever could have awakened anyone. There was no glimmer of light in the room. If there were any from the sky or lamps without, the darkened venetian blind shut it entirely out. At first I thought that a sound in the street a long way off had disturbed me, then I fancied it was in the next house. But a moment afterwards these fancies were swallowed in the alarming certainty that this sound which had awakened me had been the skilful, cautious opening of the window of this room in which I lay alone—so small and femininely helpless.

The blind was moved almost noiselessly, and then the faint light from without showed me the dim outline of a man's figure coming softly and slowly into the room. Oh, where had been my common sense when I left the window unfastened ? where had been my common sense when I volunteered to keep this bed aired ?

I lay in death-like stillness, knowing that the very slightest movement might cost me my life. The room was so thoroughly dark that the very keenest eyes could not have detected me ; could not even have distinguished the bed itself with its crimson quilt. The dressing-table scarcely creaked beneath its cautious burden, yet I felt that my ears—sharpened preternaturally by fear—could follow every step of the man as he descended from the window-seat into the room, and then stealthily advanced towards the door. I knew by instinct how skilfully he must be piloting himself. I felt the bedstead vibrate under me, while for a few steps he guided himself by holding the footboard. I followed his tread across the carpet, step by step, to the door ; I heard the handle turned ; and then I lay quite still in a horrible, sick fear.

But when I could hear the step safely outside — even there I could follow it, soft and cautious as it was—I breathed once more, and the stillness which I felt had saved my life, became suddenly unbearable to me. My first impulse was to jump up and turn the key

in the door; but in an instant I recollect that it was left on the outer side, as we had been in the habit of locking this room when we passed up to bed. If I attempted to go upstairs to Deborah the robber below might hear me; and, knowing himself discovered, would certainly rush up and murder us three defenceless women. No; I could not venture outside that door which the burglar had closed behind him. Yet how could I let Deborah sleep on with robbery and death so near her? or how could I leave the ruffian to help himself to all the valuables the house contained?

Even while I thought no plan was open to me, I had unconsciously determined what to do. I was even then groping for my dressing-gown: white though it was, I could only find it by feeling. My slippers I dare not put on for fear of a sound betraying me.

As cautiously as the thief had done, though far less skilfully, I crept step by step along the carpet. I moved the blind as he had moved it, though now it seemed to make a sound which all the terrace could hear; then I climbed to the window-seat and let myself down to the leads below. Yesterday these leads had looked to me close to the window—painfully and objectionally close—now they were so far below that I seemed to be falling down a precipice. And oh! the sensation in my bare feet when they touched the wet roof.

I had no doubt in my mind now as to the course I intended to pursue, or the quarter from which help was to be obtained. Mr. Hall himself slept in the back room on the first floor of his own house, and from him I knew I might expect assistance in my need.

I had never noticed until now that a kind of low brick wall ran up the leads, separating the houses. I came upon it unexpectedly in my chilly, groping passage, and however much in daylight I might have hesitated or feared, I climbed it, and went up to Mr. Hall's window. It would not do to allow myself time for shyness or compunction. I rapped against the glass; I rapped again and again. Of course, the room was all in darkness, but still I fancied I could wake Mr. Hall. I remembered that he told us once how often the cats wakened him, and I remembered, too, that Deborah said gentlemen on newspapers rarely slept. Again and again I knocked. If he had been as sound a sleeper as Ann he must have wakened at such summons, always supposing he had been there. So at last the dreary conviction stole upon me that he was not there. Then I felt that I must shriek out aloud in my despair, though I knew it would disturb the burglar and bring him out to me with his drawn knife.

Just then a light burst upon me carried by a gentleman who had drawn back from the window on observing the extraordinary spectacle of my figure on the leads.

"Miss Lavinia," said Mr. Hall—he spoke as courteously as if I had been in the drawing-room at home in my tabby silk and garnet

ear-rings, but I could see how hard he found it to say anything at all—"tell me what has alarmed you?"

I forgot then all about my novel costume; I even forgot the wet and cold. With a sob of relief to begin with, I told him everything, only interrupted by fits of coughing. He listened astonished and excited, while the gentleman within the room gradually lost his scruples, and drew quite close to the window to question me.

"We were sitting together downstairs," explained Mr. Hall, "when we fancied we heard a knocking somewhere, without being able to distinguish where; at least, I fancied it, while my friend ridiculed the very idea. But we decided to go over the house together, and had reached this room when I saw you. I am glad my friend is still with me, for we will collar this scoundrel. You say you did not lock the door after him? that's right—at least, it will be all right if we can insure his trying to effect his escape in the manner he effected his entrance. It will not do to make any alarm, because if we rouse Miss Deborah she will naturally run downstairs, and may perhaps fall right into the villain's way. At the same time, we must not give him the chance of letting himself out by the front door while we lie in wait for him here. Fielding, what plan have you to suggest?" Fielding, then, was the young man who had come up close to us now in a most indifferent manner. I—I hoped I should never see Mr. Fielding again after to-night.

"It will hardly do for us to separate," he said, pondering, "for if he has only one man to elude, he may be prepared to make short work of it."

I remember putting in a disjointed speech here, to the effect that, if they perilled their lives, I could never enjoy mine again; but they only smiled, instead of promising me.

There was a silent pause, while they cogitated; and I had leisure to—to feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

"I've thought of a plan," said Mr. Hall, at last. (I think that being on a daily paper makes a gentleman unusually quick.) "What do you think of it, Fielding? I will take Miss Lavinia down, while you keep watch here. As soon as I have let her through the front door, I return to you, and we take up our station one each side that next window. Meanwhile, she goes to her own front door, and knocks; a ready, natural, fearless knock, which will startle the thief, and make him hasten to this back window, where you and I will have the pleasure of seizing him."

Broken so abruptly to me, the part I had to play seemed terrible; but I knew nothing else could be done. I remember, with a haunting distinctness, that journey of mine from the scullery roof to Mr. Hall's front door, under his guidance. I remember with what thoughtfulness Mr. Fielding made himself invisible as I passed through the gaslit

room. I remember creeping down the stairs behind Mr. Hall, while I thanked him in my heart for never mentioning a light. I remember the utter silence with which he gave me his own slippers, and let me out into the chill, wet street.

And then to think of me! Standing at my own door in the middle of the night; in my dressing-gown and Mr. Hall's slippers, tapping a long prompt natural knock, and waiting for what might follow. Would it be admittance, or a cry of murder, or *what* would it be? I wondered as I stood there shivering as if with ague (for one generally wonders at a time of the keenest dread if only a moment of inaction intervenes) whether anyone else in all the quiet sleeping street had ever spent such a night as this; wondering what the policeman would say to me when he passed, as he would—as he must in about another moment; wondering how soon we could sell our furniture and let our house and go away where I could hide myself on some lone mountain-side, where this story could never reach.

A fit of coughing interrupted this arrangement. How many hours ago was it I had knocked? Had I better rap again? Surely the day must be dawning. Surely by now the marauder must have killed both my gallant, brave preservers, and escaped in safety through the garden?

Interminable as this waiting time had seemed to me, the morning had *not* dawned; the policeman even had not passed; when our door was opened to me by Deborah herself—alive, and apparently unmaimed, but as white as a sheet. At first we intended to faint in each other's arms, but something prevented us—a call to us from the bed-room on the first floor.

"I heard the sounds in that room," explained Deborah, excitedly amid her tears, as I put on a waterproof in the hall, "and I thought it was you, and went down. I couldn't wake Ann, though I tried all the time I was dressing. And then, when I went to the door, they—they told me they'd got him safe—the murderer—in the dark there. Oh! Lavinia, I shall never sleep again. And they sent me to open the door to you; and—and—"

We had reached the bedroom by this time, and found that the gas had been lighted; and there, sitting right under it, tied in his chair, and guarded by Mr. Hall and his friend, sat the ruffian burglar. If ever there were in the world two women who might have been knocked down by one feather, those two women were Deborah and I; for this robber and marauder was the elderly gentleman who had called in answer to our advertisement; the elderly gentleman who had been anxious that his young friend should find a comfortable, airy home with us; the elderly gentleman who had been particular about the plate and linen!

Deborah told all this in a breath, begging me to be calm; but she might more naturally have begged this of Mr. Hall and Mr. Fielding,

for they were laughing and enjoying themselves tremendously at the spectacle of this elderly gentleman piteously entreating to be released, and begging them to take the silver from a lot of hidden-away pockets. I've always been glad since that they did not leave the decision to Deborah and me; for he was a practised villain, you see, and might have done endless mischief elsewhere; which he cannot do now.

That very night Deborah and I quite determined we would leave London at once; and we made our plans, crying all the time from excitement, and weariness, and disappointment, and the prospect of another removal after having just got comfortably settled, and spending all our surplus money.

Next evening, while I was nursing my cold, and we were both as melancholy as we could be, in came Mr. Hall and that young friend of his whom he had called Fielding. At first I was aggravated, and thought why couldn't they have come yesterday when we had on our tabby silks and looked so comfortable; but presently I forgot all about this. That night-adventure seemed to have made us all suddenly into old friends, and we laughed together over the burglary; and somehow—through the way Mr. Hall put it, I'm sure it was—I entirely forgot that my part (or even appearance) had been out of the common, and began to coincide with an implied sort of belief that Mr. Hall and his friend had managed it alone, and Deborah and I had only been required at the last moment to identify the ruffian. This view of the case suited me very well, and we got on most amicably to other matters. Other matters? Why, I speak of them 'as if they were ordinary ones; and yet—and yet here was the *real* answer to our advertisement.

Mr. Fielding was seeking a home, he told us, and had a wish to be near his friend, though he could not live in a house that had not—as he expressed it—a lady at its head.

"And I do hope," added Mr. Hall, genially, "that you will take him, Miss Lavinia. I want him near me, yet my irregular meals and hours would kill him. He has been used to the care of a mother and sister, and would miss them sorely in a bachelor's house."

Well, before that visit was over it was all arranged, and now he lives with us; and is, as it were, one of us. He says he never misses his mother's care, having ours; and perhaps it is true, for Deborah and I have grown to love him well. And besides that, no one could more thoroughly appreciate the plate he rescued; or more thoroughly enjoy a good lemon-pudding.

MARK HARDCastle.

FORESHADOWING.

I KNOW, my friend,
 We never have been lovers ; but when we
 Of these sweet summer-hours shall find the end,
 And there shall be
 A courteous close to all our pleasant speech,—
 When you go out into the hurrying crowd,
 To battle like a warrior iron-browed,
 For all the worldly blessings which you claim,
 Wealth, power, and fame—
 Things which I do not crave and cannot reach—
 I wonder if your heart will be the same,
 Will beat as evenly and tranquilly—
 Away from me ?
 If, when you find your separate life once more,
 Twill be as whole and happy as before ?

It may be so—
 Ambition has broad leaves, which overgrow
 The feebler heart-plants, blooming small and low ;
 And yet, I think
 When time, or change, or both have snapped the
 link
 Which holds us now so lightly heart to heart,
 When you have found out new and pleasant ways
 From these apart—
 Have loved fair women, and have known great men,
 Perhaps grown great yourself, and tasted praise—
 Despite the rosy ties which bind you then,
 You will look back to these tame, quiet days
 With dim, strange pain—
 And haply in your dreaming think of me
 Half mournfully,
 Saying—while all surrounding witcheries
 Seem dull and vain,
 And Beauty's smile, and Flatt'ry's ministries
 Lose, for the time, their hold on heart and brain—
 “ Ah, me ! how little she was like to these !
 Would I could look upon that face again ! ”



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

IN THE CHAPEL RUINS.

EDWARD EVANS.